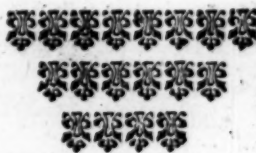


T H E

2

REWARD. O F DILIGENCE.

By LEWES SHARPE, Rector of Moreton-
Hampstead in the County of Devon.



L O N D O N,

Printed for James Collins in the Temple-passage
from Essex Street. MDCLXXIX.



THE ARD

THE ARD

THE ARD

THE ARD

THE ARD



TO THE HONOURABLE
S^r. WILLIAM COURTENAY
OF

Powderham-Castle, Baronet,
my Noble Patron.

SIR,

I *was not from too tender indulgence to mine own Conceptions, that I have given this ensuing Discourse this publick Birth, and endeavoured to immortalize it by dedicating it to your Name: but taking a just measure of my Obligations by your Favours, I easily discerned, that my grateful Acknowledgments ought to be as open and manifest, as They have been notoriously free and bountiful; and al-*
A 2 *though*

though by this I am so far from requiring them, as I was from deserving or expecting them, yet I do hereby recognize and set up for them This, as my Pillar of remembrance. Sir, I am so conscious, that my weaknesses are derived to all the issues of my studies and labours, that I fear this Address will rather enhance, than in any degree lessen my debts to you, because what I here present is unworthy of you, and might rather affect an everlasting Concealment, than a short Animadversion from you; and therefore I must appeal to the generous tenderness of your compassions to sanctuary me from the severity of your Judgment; being confident, that when you consider it as the result of Duty, perform'd with Love and Thankfulness, it will not only obtain

your Pardon, but your Acceptance too. If my Present be like Jacob's to Joseph, in that it is little; 'tis also like it in that 'tis the best I have; and I heartily wish it were much in a little, the goodness of the Quality might compensate for the scantness of the Quantity: but if the perusal of it prove to be little pleasing and profitable, 'tis some relief to me to foresee, that it cannot be much disgustful and wearisome. 'Tis manifest from the purport of this Sermon, that He in the event will be the best man, who employeth and improveth his proper Trusts and Talents to the best purposes: and if it contribute any assistance towards a faithful management of your great and excellent Gifts and Interests, and provoke you to improve the many fair and in-

viting advantages you partake of, to be yet more serviceable to God and his Church, to your Prince and Country, I shall have cause to bless God, that he hath put it into my heart thus willingly to offer it to your perusal and service.

That your Honour, your Exemplarily Virtuous and Honourable Lady, the many gallant and flourishing Branches derived from you, and all these other Relations which depend upon and serve you, may constantly first seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and be more and more blessed, especially with Spiritual and Heavenly blessings, is, and shall be the instant and incessant Prayer of him who is,

Sir,

Your most obliged and
humbly devoted Servant

Moreton-Hampstead
Nov. 20. 1674.

LEWES SHARPE.

THE



T H E
R E W A R D
O F
D I L I G E N C E.

For unto every one that bath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that bath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.
Matt. 25. 29.

S E C T. I.



THE particle [For] in the front of the Text, suggests the connection thereof with the precedent Discourse; which is a *Parable* of a *Man* travelling into a far Country, and delivering several *Talents* to his Servants to trade withall, with the issue thereof upon his return. Whether we are to conceive the words of the Text as Christs

own words, upon the recitation of the *Parable*, inferring from it, *παρενδεικναι*, a moral for our Instruction; or as the words of the Lord of the Servants, mentioned in the Parable, upon the Sentence he passed against the slothful, to the advantage of the faithful Servant; is a matter of some Doubt, but of no Moment. 'Tis certain, our Saviour us'd the same words upon various occasions, and that with such a signal *Emphasis*, that they are recorded by three of the Evangelists, and more than once by two of them, (*Matt. 13, 12. Luk. 8, 18. and 19, 29. Mark 14, 25.*) and 'tis plain, that the *τῷ ἔχοντι*, *to him that hath* in the Text, is an allusion to the Participle *τῷ ἔχοντι*, *to him that hath ten talents*, in the former Verse; and *the taking away from him that hath not*, refers to *the taking away of the Talent from him that hid it*; and consequently, that the words are our Saviours Red-dition or Application of the Parable to the thing signified by it.

Seet. 2. The words in their general sense are proverbial, and are here translated from a civil to a mystical sense. And 'tis usual with God to apply himself to us Men in such a way as hath agreement with our Natures, as guided and acted by innate principles of Reason, Judgment, and Righteousness, and to observe in his dealings with us, such Rules and measures as we ourselves think reasonable and necessary to observe and

and conform unto, in the transaction of common affairs amongst our selves. As men which are directed by the prescripts of common prudence, do not commit the highest Trusts to untried Persons, but first commit a lesser proportion of their Concerns, and then a greater, only in case of approved faithfulness and Diligence; and on the contrary, in case of Negligence and unfaithfulness in lesser matters, will not intrust greater, but remand former trusts: so God walketh by a rule of like sympathy towards us, first, he bestows a meaner measure of good Gifts upon us, and then a richer proportion, only in case of a regular and faithful management of them; and on the contrary, if the gifts of a lower account be not well managed, he denieth such as are of an higher, and will not think us worthy of those already conferred.

Seet. 3. And this is the design of my Text, to represent from our ordinary practice, *ὡς ὁρῶμεν*, the equity of that decree and method which God hath established, and ordinarily observeth in the dispensation of his Gifts to us, and how unquestionably reasonable the distribution of his Rewards and Punishments is. My Text being applyed to persons of contrary dispositions and deportments, and of opposite states and conditions before God, contains a *Thesis* and an *Antithesis*; the former promissory,

ry, signifying the good portion of the faithful and diligent; the other minatory, declaring the evil portion of the unfaithful and negligent.

1. A *Thesis*, *Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.*

2. An *Antithesis*; *But from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.* The first will be the Subject of my Discourse.

1. Here is a *Thesis*, *Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* That my Discourse may be the more distinct and satisfactory, I will first consider the τὸ φυσικόν, the natural sense of the words, as they propound a Truth to affect our Understandings; and then the τὸ λογικόν, the rational force of them, as they propound an Argument to affect our practical Judgments, and are designed to sway our choices, and excite our endeavours.

Sec. 4. First, we will consider the τὸ φυσικόν, the natural sense of the words, as they propound a truth to affect our Understandings. And here note;

1. A Subject, *Unto every one that hath.* In which let us examine

1. The nature of the Subject simply considered, πῶς ἔχειν, what is meant by [*Having*] according to the notion and intent of the Text. A man may be said to have a thing two ways.

1. Sim-

1. Simply, and absolutely. In a Grammatical and Literal sense, every one which hath an occupancy or propriety, is said to *have* a thing. This way of [Having] barely considered, is not here meant. For so the wicked and slothful Servant from whom the Talent was taken, was said *to have a Talent* as well as the good and faithful Servant. So the Gentiles are said $\pi\acute{o}\tau\epsilon\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\nu\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$, *to have God in their knowledge*, Rom. I. 28. and the Jews are say'd *to have the Law and the Prophets*, Luk. 16. 29. and having eyes see not. Mar. 8. 18. What *Aristotle* affirmeth of the Man which hath the true Notices of righteousness but is disturbed with unruly and mutinous passions, may be say'd of him that thus *Hath* only, $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu\ \pi\acute{o}\omega\varsigma\ \kappa\acute{\iota}\ \mu\eta\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$, *he hath as if he had not*. We may be said to [Have] a thing

2. Effectively and relatively. In a Moral and Theological sense, They only are said *to have a thing*, which have it upon worthy and comely terms, and carry themselves suitably to what they have : which is done,

1. When they esteem and value what they have, answerably to the worth and excellency thereof.

2. When they are careful to keep and preserve what they have, as a Trust they are to account for : as they do not make light of what they have, so neither do they prodigally waste what they have.

3. When

3. When they use and employ what they have to the uses and purposes for which they have it: *when they receive not the grace of God* (that is, the gifts of grace) *in vain*, as the *Apostle* exhorts 2. *Cor.* 6. 1.

4. When they declare and make it appear by their exemplary practice that they have what they have. Our Saviour much affected to speak after the manner of the *Hebrews*, and with them a thing is often said to be when it appear-eth to be. That this is the genuine notion and import of the [*Having*] in the Text, is evident from the tenour of the precedent Parable; for the Servants received not the Talents to be Proprietaries but Stewards of them: they were delivered to them as *Deposita*, stocks of Trust to be traded withal, and increased by a publick commerce. Let us examine,

Señ. 5. 2. The Extensiveness and universality of this Subject, 'tis *παντι εχοντι*, to all, or every one (at least under the Gospel) which hath, without exception or limitation. *God is no respecter of persons, but to every person in every nation which so hath, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* For God having constituted and declared this as the Law and way of his proceedings towards the Children of men, he is under a bond of engagement to his own Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, and Faithfulness, constantly to give to every one that so Hath, and will

will at no hand depart from the terms he hath imposed on himself respectively to our advantage. Note we,

Señ. 6. 2dly, The Attributes here affirmed and ascribed unto every one that Hath; and they are two, first, *shall be given*; secondly, *he shall have abundance*.

1. *Shall be given*. This may be understood two wayes, either

1. In opposition to the taking away spoken of in the Antithesis, and then the meaning is, He that Hath, Hath what he hath to Have and to Hold it, as we say in our Law, the Gifts he hath shall be ensured to him upon terms of continuance and establishment. This is not the whole truth here intended; for a gift properly being something imparted to the advantage of the Receiver, and then made the Receiver's when first given (*Data eo tempore quo dantur, sunt accipientis*, sayth the Law) by giving to him that Hath, I conceive is meant something which is given.

2. In contradistinction to what is already received; if not of a different kind, yet at least of different degrees. *Adimplebit & cumulabit quod dedit*, He will fill up and increase to higher measures that which he hath given, saith St. Austin. All Gifts which are used according to the mind and Will of God, become through his blessing like the Bread with which our Saviour

viour fed his Disciples, which multiplied in the using (*Mat. 14. 20.*) and like the Widowes Oyl, which increased in the spending.

Señ. 7. 2dly, Shall have abundance. *שְׂרָרָה* *Sharay*, *Shall be given in all abundance*, as the most learned Annotator renders it. Whether this refer to a greater proportion of Gifts in the same kind, or to an addition of Gifts of another kind and of greater worth and excellency than the former improved ones, is a matter of doubt with some; but it seems plain to me by the purport of the Parable, that a variety of more choice and excellent gifts rather than a plenty in the same kind is here meant. for the expression [*Shall be given in all abundance*] refers to the advantageous sentence passed on the behalf of the good and faithful Servant, declaring how just it was upon the improvement of his Five Talents, that he should obtain such acceptation and success as he did; that is, that he should be judged meetly qualified *to enter into his Masters joy*, and the wicked and slothful Servants loss should be His gaine. And that which makes it most evident is this, as the casting the unprofitable Servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth, is an Emblem and representation of hellish damnation and destruction (which is described divers times in the same words) *Mat. 8. 12. 22. 13. 24. 51.* and denotes the great wrath

wrath and severity of his Lord towards him, so the good and faithful Servants entering into his Masters joy, is a type and representation of an exaltation to a state of heavenly glory (which is also sometimes described in words of Affinity with it (*Psf.* 16. 11. *Heb.* 12. 2.) and denotes his Lords singular delight in him, and the transcendent favours and priviledges with which he graced and honoured him. So that, *by giving in all abundance* is meant, a bestowing, upon the employment of what he hath, the most enriching endowments, such Gifts and graces which capacitate for the Highest attainments we can desire. He that so *Hath* shall have that Life which Christ came that he might have, and that he might have it more abundantly, *Joh.* 10. 10. And thus I have finished what I had to say concerning the $\tau\acute{o}$ $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ or literal sense of the words.

Seet. 8. 2dly, We will consider the $\tau\acute{o}$ $\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\kappa\eta\tau\acute{o}$, the rational force of the words as they propound an Argument to affect our practical Judgments, and are designed to sway our choices and to excite our endeavours; and that is this: That every man which sincerely bestirs him, and faithfully to his power acteth and manageth in a regular way those abilities and Gifts with which he is invested, of what kind soever they are, natural or supernatural, common or special, acquired or infused, weak or strong,

strong, many or few, he shall not only better his say'd estate of abilities and Gifts, but is also in a ready way to receive abilities and Gifts of a nobler nature and higher concerne. The drift of our Saviour in this and the former Parable, which begins the Chapter, is to provoke us to Watchfulness and Diligence in our duties, that we may be prepared for the coming of our Lord to judgment. And the argument urged in the Text shews the necessity of this Watchfulness and diligence in order to our standing in judgment before him, and that we may be accounted worthy to escape the punishment which shall be inflicted on the careless and slothful, from the rule and order which he observes in his distribution of rewards and punishments. If we obtaine acceptation with our Lord in the day of Account, and partake of the benefit and comfort of the approving and justifying Award and remunerating grace of that day, we must unfeignedly and impartially stir up our selves to the utmost of what we are able, for the Improvement of the abilities and Gifts we have receiv'd, for the honour of God and good of Men.

Sect. 9. I find upon diligent inquiry and examination, that Commentators do not concur in judgment concerning the nature of these Talents to which the Text refers. Some understand by them the Gifts of Nature; others, the

others, the principles of reason; others, common grace; others, the gifts of the Spirit; others, ministerial abilities; others, the publication of the Evangelical Doctrine according to mens various capacities: but they are generally agreed so far as I have inquired, that the Talents were of the same nature, and consequently equally capable of improvement, and upon improvement equally capable according to their proportion of the like acceptation and success.

Sect. 10. I think 'tis easily discerned, that the Talents were not in their immediate natures and appropriate qualities, of a regenerating and saving import: for the Parable describeth the state of Mankind in general, and shews how it is eventually both with good and bad; and 'tis expressly said of him which had the one Talent, that he was *statu quo*, whilst he had the Talent, a wicked and slothful Servant, and therefore these Talents had not a necessary conjunction with an heavenly condition of a saving consequence. And if it should be granted that these Talents were in their proper and immediate natures regenerating and sanctifying graces, then it will unavoidably follow, that regenerating and sanctifying grace may be totally and finally lost, which some men will by no means believe to be possible. What is premised seems to me a sufficient inducement to conclude, that the Talents were

in themselves of indifferent Nature; not things absolutely good, but things of good or bad abode, as they were used by them which had them. Yet be pleased to observe, as the non-improvement of the Talent was an equitable consideration on which to exercise an act of vindictive Justice, so the improvement thereof would have been an equitable consideration on which to exercise an act of remunerating Grace. I do not mean, that the improvement would deserve *ex condigno*, a reward of grace as the non-improvement did deserve a reward (if I may so say) of punishment; but that the improvement by the just ordination of God (who will have mercy upon whom and upon what terms he pleaseth) would have had eventually a gracious acceptation and a bountiful reward, as the non-improvement heavy displeasure and punishment. For as he which hid his Talent was severely punished, so they which improved their Talents were bountifully recompensed. From whence we may very rationally infer, That God is propitious to our faithful endeavours, and doth so bless us with the presence of his grace when we lay out our power to our utmost to serve him in our places and callings, that he will derive to us the most enriching Gifts and Graces.

Sect. II. Donteclok against Castellio concludes, That all the care, study and diligence which

which men can use to promote their salvation, is vain and to no purpose, rather hurtful than profitable, before Faith (he means justifying Faith) and the Spirit of renovation. And the Divines of *Halsia* with others of the *Dort* confederacy suffrage to the same effect. Which Assertion seems to me to have a most malignant aspect on all the ministries of Religion: for it cramps all rational and manlike endeavours, indeed cassates the very bonds of Duty from all irregenerate men, and frustrates the grace of God which hath appeared to the world to the purposes of salvation.

Sect. 12. I do not affect to make the Pulpit look like a Cockpit: but yet such is my zeal for every Doctrine which is according to godliness, and averfation to all pernicious errors, especially such as have directly an ill influence on a good Life, and discourage men which are bad from endeavouring to be good, as the aforecited assertion doth, that I shall propugne and justifie to my power that Doctrine which my Text suggests against these men of interest which have opposed and condemn'd it, and withal endeavour to rescue those unregenerate men which have received the forementioned Doctrine from those prejudices they are under against working out of their salvation. And this I shall do so practically, that you shall have no just reason to blame and censure me for preach-

ing of a controverſie upon ſuch an occaſion as this is, which is not deſigned to inſtruct us in the Science of Controverſies, but to make us honeſt Men, good Chriſtians, and moſt exemplary Miniſters.

Seſt. 13. That Poſition which I infer and ſhall diſcourſe from my Text in oppoſition to that ill-natured Doctrin, taught by the afore-named Doctors, and too too many alſo here amongſt us in *England*, is this: That whoſoever under the Goſpel faithfully imployes and improves the abilities and gifts of Nature and common Grace, (though his works are not pleaſant to God. Yet) he ſhall find ſuch a degree of acceptation with him (though comparatively low and imperfect) that he ſhall be in a ready way to obtain from him Spiritual, and Special abilities and graces. &c.

For unto every one that hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have abundance. That is, He which exerciſeth himſelf in the employment of the Gifts already received, and maketh it appear that he hath what he hath by uſing it faithfully to the ends and purpoſes for which he hath it, he ſhall not only have what he hath continued and multiplied to him, but ſhall alſo have gifts of a ſuperiour, and of a more excellent and perfective Nature conferred upon him. This is the genuine ſenſe of the Text, and my Poſition a legitimate deduction from it, and as naturally

rally flowes from it as a Stream from a Fountain. *Hierocles* tells us, that he which will be made a Θεός, a *Godlike-person*, he ought first to be made an ἄνθρωπος, a *Man*, that is, he ought to live κατὰ λόγον, as a *reasonable Creature*. And a greater than he, the *Apostle* speaking of the last Resurrection saith, *that was not first which is Spiritual, but that which is Natural, and then that which is Spiritual.* I Cor. 15. 46. So 'tis in the spiritual Resurrection (for the παλιγγενεσία, the word used by the *Pythagoreans* to expresse the Souls return to another Body after its departure from a dead one, the *Regeneration*, as we English it, or the translation of a man from under the power of *Satan* into the Kingdom of *Christ*, is called the *First Resurrection*, Rev. 20. 15. a *making alive to God*, Rom. 6. 11. and such a making alive as the *making alive from the dead*, Rom. 6. 13. I say here too) there is first that which is Natural, and then that which is Spiritual: we must first be fit to do the works of men, before we can be fit to serve the ends of God. I mean God will not prefer us to his heavenly Kingdom, till we have first learned κατὰ νόμον ζῆν, to live according to the conduct of a reasonable Soul, as *Saint Clement* speaks.

Sect. 14. Because the *Grecian* learning abounds with strict precepts and directions against unruly Passions, and brutal Appetites,

chargeth man to restore Reason to her Scepter, to consult her as an Oracle, and to attend her motions as the $\tau\omicron\ \eta\gamma\mu\omicron\nu\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma$, the supreme directive faculty, and to obey her as a Law, to live temperately, righteously, lovingly, discerning betwixt good and evil, contemning the world, and exercising the mind in excursions towards God, expecting a reward in case of well-doing and fearing a punishment in case of evil-doing, and to be $\pi\tau\epsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\gamma\omicron\gamma\omicron\ \alpha\acute{\nu}\eta\rho$, like a cube or dye, a square and upright man under the alternative, and interchangeable courses of fortune, as Reason suggests we should. St. Basil exhorts Scholars to the study of it, and giveth this Reason for it, that they may be prepared $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \alpha\acute{\nu}\omega$, to those things which are from above. *Albapinus* observes, *Antiquitus fieri non nasci Christianos*, that anciently Christians were made not born. Made so by long and laborious steps and degrees. First they were made *Catechumeni*, instructed in the first principles of Religion; in the reasonableness and goodness of Christs institutions; and upon a conviction of judgment and reformation of manners they became *competentes*, suitors and petitioners for Baptism, the *laver of Regeneration*, Tit. 3. 5. and so were forced by slow paces and approaches (or as the first general Constantinopolitan Councell expresseth it) $\chi\rho\omicron\nu\iota\zeta\epsilon\nu\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha\nu$, to creep on with time and leisure into the bosome of the

the

the Church; and sometimes, many years preparation was the Preface to their admission into the society of the Faithful; but the more they improved themselves in their attention and obedience unto the Reason of men, the sooner and easier were they brought to give assent and obedience to the faith of Christians. *for the understanding of a man (as Solomon speaketh) is the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20. 27.)* that is, a most excellent candle set up within us to shew us our way and work. This is that *Δαίμων*, that superintendent power the *Stoicks* and *Platonists* so often speak of, which God hath given to every man to be the Guide and overseer of his Life; and as this *Candle* is lighted and kindled originally from God, so it still shines in his beam, directing us to distinguish betwixt good and evil, and finally tendeth and leadeth unto God as the prototype of all truth and goodness which can either perfect our minds or satisfy our wills. Here the *Apostle* speaking of the Gentiles who had no other Candle to guide them but this, saith, *that they do by Nature the things contained in the Law, and so shew the work of the Law written in their hearts.* (Rom. 2. 14. 15. That is from the natural notions of good and evil suggested to them from the exercise of Reason, they were convinced, that it was meet and right that they should practise those things which God in his written

law had commanded: the matter and substance of that which was effected by the written Law was wrought by the dictate of natural Reason, and consequently as the one so the other in its primary designment and proper use was an apt means to lead unto God, and to captivate all the reasonings and thoughts of mens hearts unto the obedience of the Faith of Christ.

Sect. 15. St. *Augustine* (who was no friend to *Pelagianism*) observes in his Book *De Vera Religione*, that he which is furnished with the knowledg of Philosophy *plurimum juvari*, is very much helped for the understanding of the Christian Faith. And tells us, that many of the *Platonists*, who were much addicted to the study of Philosophy, and the practice of morall Virtues, very readily became Christians in his time. 'Tis said the Sect of the *Epicureans* were better fed than taught; and perhaps some amongst other Sects were better taught then manner'd: but certainly diverse of them were so well taught and manner'd too, that there was a very great alliance betwixt their Doctrines and Practices, and those of Christians; which made *Octavius* think *Philosophers* and *Christians* to be terms convertible, and to say, that the *Christians* were now *Philosophers*, or the *Philosophers* were then *Christians*. The humane nature being σύστημα λογικῶν νοημάτων, a systeme of rational notions, as *Clemens* speaketh, and Philo-
sophick

sophick studies and endeavours the manurance and improvement of them. I think he said not amiss when he called Philosophy *πρωταρχη* & *πρῆξις*, the elementary principle or first inlet of the Christian Faith. For the Religion of Christ being the most reasonable Religion in the world, is so well suited to the constitution of our rational Beings, that (adventitious prepossessions and prejudices being lain aside, which a Philosophick ingenuity and deportment will provoke, and in some measure help us to do) when 'tis presented to our view and propounded to our choice, we shall be ready to say of it, as *Adam* of *Eve* when God first brought her to him. *This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone*, and instantly desire and embrace it. And I am confident in the point of morality, there is scarce any thing so peculiar to the Church of Christ: but it was liked and recommended to us by the Schooles of the ancient Philosophers; which is a plain argument, that our Christian precepts for morality are not meerly from external imposition, or arbitrary obligation, or to be found only in those sacred volumes we call the *Bible*, but are natures own Tables of the Law in another edition and promulgation, and in truth a fair Copy of the impressions of Reason upon our own Souls, and discoverable and legible within our selves. And because the moral precepts of Christ

Christ are thus underprop'd with the stedfast Reason and approbation of mankind, and do on every side square with the common principles and sentiments of every mans Soul, they must needs gain hugely upon the minds and hearts of Philosophick temper'd men, who have a great reverence for the dictates of Reason, and from an honest moral integrity hate whatsoever they apprehend will debauch their Natures as they are reasonable Creatures. And therefore *Origen* called *Celsus* to consider, if it were not the agreeableness of the principles of the Christian Faith *κοινὰς ἐννοίας*, with common notions, the correspondency of them with the universal Reason of the world, which rendred the preaching of the Christian Faith so prevalent and successful with all candid and ingenuous hearers.

Sect. 16. Therefore (saith the Apostle, of the *Bereans*) many of them believed: wherefore? because (as he tells you in the former verse) they were more noble than those of *Thessalonica*. *Act* 17. 11. 12. *δὲ γενέσκει*, the comparison refers not so much to their civil pedigree and extraction as to their moral temper and disposition. They were more generous and ingenuous. The Greek Fathers (saith *Grotius*) interpret the word by *ἐπιεικέσκει*, more moderate and equitably minded. They were a people of a proper becoming temper; of a rational, affable, pliable deportment towards

towards all; full of candour and equanimity towards the Apostles; inquisitive after the truth, free and loyal to it: they were a sort of people which proportioned their regards suitably to the nature of Things, Persons, and Doctrines, and consequently judged of, and affected the Apostles preachments answerably to the weightiness and concernment of them, and according to the evidences of Truth they discerned in them; all which appears, in that *they received the words with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* The *Bereans* were not biased with unreasonable passions and interests, as the *Jews of Thessalonica* were, as you may see in the fifth Verse; but acquitted themselves (if I may so speak) like *noble Gentlemen*; hearkened to the promulgation of the Truth attentively and patiently; examined matters carefully and diligently, and judged thereof impartially; all which are acts of Reason, Labour and Industry, and as the Apostle intimates, preparatory to the entertainment of the Christian Faith.

Sect. 17. I doubt not but you observe, that the reason generally assigned why the *Jews* rejected the *Christian* Faith, is, because their *Wills and Appetites* had the predominancy of their *Understandings and Judgments*, *Joh. 5, 40. Mat. 23, 27. Joh. 4, 48.* their Reasons and Consciences were oftentimes perswaded and convinced,

ced, but because their carnal affections and secular inclinations were not accommodated and gratified, *they repented not that they might believe.*

Matt. 21, 32. Job. 8, 43, 44, 45. When the *Turks* (as an Honourable Person reports) design to drink to drunkenness, they first make a very great and unusual noise, to drive down their rational Souls (as they pretend) to the remotest parts of their Bodies, that being at a great distance from their intoxicating cups, they may not observe and be conscious of their brutish Intemperance. Thus it is in a manner with all men which addict themselves to habituate wickedness, and make provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh; they dethrone and assassinate their Understandings, and as it were, drive and force their rational faculties out of their coasts, and give themselves over to the Empire and government of their seditious Appetites and sawcy Passions; which is such an irrational and brutish way of acting, that with *Trismegistus* it is *τὸ μέδν*, a sort of drunkenness, yea, *μανίας εἶδος*, an appearance or species of Madness; and we may truly say of such a man, as *Jacob* when he saw *Joseph's* Coat; *It is my sons coat, but evil beasts have devoured him*, *Gen. 37. 33.* Here is the outward garment and habit of a Man, but evil Beasts have devoured the Man; he hath the outward shape, and unweildy body of a Man, but he hath

hath not the inward form, the proper differencing Essence of a Man: those evil Beasts his Passions and Lusts, have torn in pieces and devoured his reasonable Soul: he hath the name of a Man, and still retains the unprofitable and troublesome Carcass of a Man, but the informing and active part of the Man is departed: his Vices have so corrupted and tainted him, that he is quite unman'd and become like *Babylon, an habitation of Devils, and the Hold of every foul Spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird, Rev. 18, 2.*

Se^{ct}. 18. Questionless you observe, That before the Prodigal Son in the Parable returned home to his Father, or was resolved so to do, he is said to come* to Himself, *Luke 15, 17.* that is, he returned to a sober and regular use of his Understanding and Reason; he acquitted himself like a Son of Reason, before he acquitted himself like a Son of God. Whilst a man departs from God he is beside himself, distracted and mad, a fugitive from a Rational, as well as a Divine Life, and a meer exile from his own original Essence and Being. *Solum hoc animal Naturæ fines transgreditur. Man is the onely Creature which transgresseth the bounds of Nature,* said one, of sinning man. Other Creatures are conducted by the instinct of Nature, but sinning Man contradicts it; and how can man return to the God of Nature, who
return-

returneth not to the Order of Nature? you shall therefore find, that when God most passionately desires and pursues the Reformation and welfare of a people, he exhorteth and wisheth them to awaken and stir up those noble Principles of Understanding and Reason which are within them, as a means to it. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their later end,* Deut. 32, 29. *Consider your wayes,* saith God, by the Prophet Haggai, once and again, Hag. 1. 5, 7. and the Prophet concludes, that the Rebellion of Judah and of Jerusalem, proceeded from their defectiveness this way, *the Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his masters crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider* (Isa. 1, 3.) Did men (under the Gospel especially) exercise their Understandings and reasoning Faculties, as they should and might do, and comport with their Dictates and Instigations as other Creatures do with their Instincts and Inclinations, they would be as serviceable to God in their relations to him, as other Creatures are to their Owners and Benefactors. For, when God speaketh of his Peoples *for-saking him*, that is, Objects, Ways, and Engagements, which are Spiritual and Heavenly, and effective to their Perfection and Happiness, and their turning to Objects, Wayes, and Engagements which are Temporal, Carnal and Earth-

ly

ly and Ineffective to any good, he represents it as a thing very monstrous and quite beside the tendency and course of Nature. *Be astonished O ye Heavens, and be ye horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have committed two Evils, they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that will hold no water.* Jer. 2. 12. 13. *q. d.* this fact of yours bespeaks you so far degenerated from the spirit and actions of men, that you are grown quite out of kind, and the whole course of Nature upbraids this as a most stupendious exorbitancy, and a most enormous and intolerable practice.

Señ. 19. 'Tis remarkable that the man to whom our Saviour said, *thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, (Mar. 12. 34.) is said to answer *Discreetly*; *νῦν ἔχω*, from *νῦν ἔχειν*, saith *Erasmus* on the place. He answered like a man accustomed *Secundum intellectum vivere*, as *St. Austin* speaks. *Like a Man which had his wits about him*, as we say: he was (to use *Ennius* his Phrase) *egregiè cordatus homo*, a man of an enlarged Soul and great freedom of Mind: he was in a great measure rescued from a sensual vassalage, and acted by the generous principle of Understanding and Reason. He answered skilfully, wisely, learnedly, for so the word often signifieth amongst the Greeks. From which

we may collect with St. Hierome, that Ignorance is farther from the Kingdome of God than Knowledge; and that they which shew themselves Men, as the Prophet exhorts the Jews, in order to their reformation and reconciliation with God (*Isa. 46. 8.*) and faithfully comport with the dictates of Reason, abstaining from the things which that prohibits, and practising the things which that requires; they are in the suburbs of religion, and near borderers on the Kingdom of God; and may seem to say to Religion as *Ruth* to *Booz*, *spread the skirt of thy Garment over us, for thou art our near kinsman*, and are not far from the Kingdom of God.

Sett. 20. I confess I think the habits and acts of moral Vertues and some common Graces to be materially the same with the habits and acts of Spiritual and Evangelical Graces, and to differ only as the less perfect from the more perfect: but yet I take them to be specifically distinct. For such is the Nature of these things, that a gradual perfection constituteth a specific difference. As in *Numbers*, a variation of Degrees alters the species and makes one number formally distinct from another. *e. g.* the number Ten differs only by the addition of degrees from the number Five; and yet Ten is not only individually but specifically a distinct number from Five. And though Nine be specifically distinct from Ten as well as Five, yet

Nine

Nine is nearer and may more easily be brought up to Ten, than Five can. So though moral Vertues and common Graces are things of a distinct Kind and Nature from Divine and Evangelical Graces, yet they have more alliance and sympathy with evangelical Graces than habitual Vices have. 'Tis true, he which is in the Church-yard is formally and indeed out of this Congregation as well as he which is distant from it a thousand miles; yet the one is nearer and may more easily come into this congregation than the other can: so a moral man and one endowed with common Graces, I mean, a man which doth follow the conduct of Reason so far and as much as an unregenerate man can do, in shunning the Vices his Reason condemns, and in practising the Vertues his Reason commends, which hath an honest integrity of heart as *Abimeleck* had *Gen.* 20. 6. and keepeth all the known commandments of God, as the young man which came to Christ had done, (*Matt.* 19, 20.) which feareth God, worketh Righteousness, and giveth Alms to the Poor as *Cornelius* did, (*Act.* 10, 37.) and hath a Zeal for the worship of God, as the *Jews* had, (*Rom.* 10, 2.) and intends well as to lower inferiour ends, as *Paul* before his conversion did, (*Act.* 23. 1. 26, 5.) I say, though such an one be really, and in truth out of the Kingdom of God; as well as the man debauched with Vice, and

distracted with the perturbation of his Passions, and Lusts, yet he is not so far from the Kingdom of God as the other is : (*Mark 12, 34.*) he hath not so much to do; so many hinderances to remove, and so many inducements to gain, so much preparation to make, so many degrees of enmity against God and Religion to abate, and so many steps towards a resolution of reformation to take, as a lewd Russian hath. I know that God is able of Stones to raise up Children to *Abraham*: but I know also that God will not do all that he is able to do; for God doth not administer and manage the affairs of his heavenly Kingdom as a Physical Agent in a way of Natural power, but as a Sovereign Lord, by a Rectoral Power, determining how things shall be effected according to the Council of his own Will; and 'tis the Will of God as affected and inclined by potent Considerations, and congruous motives suggested to him by his Wisdom and Righteousness, which directs and draws forth his Power into Action, when he regenerates a man. And though he may in some extraordinary cases now and then occurring, to subserve his own Glory and the general good of Mankind, translate a Man from under the power of Satan into the Kingdom of his Son, without respect had to previous workings to harbinger and make the way ready for it; yet ordinarily 'tis
not

not so, there is a mediation of initial Graces and preparatory Dispositions, *πρωτοδικαζεν*, to forward and fit the subject for it. Hence 'tis said of those Gentiles which believed upon St. Pauls preaching to them, *that they were ordained to eternal life*, Acts 13. 48. *παραρρυθισι*, *marshalled or trained up*, *orderly disposed and in a ready posture*, that is, prepared according to Gods order and appointment, to obtain eternal Life. The progresses of Grace imitate the methods of Nature, bring the designed effects to pass by degrees, and do not pass from one extreme to another, without the mediation of some preparatory Dispositions. Not that these initial preparatory Dispositions do efficiently cooperate with Gods Spirit to the production of habitual, sanctifying, and saving Grace, as temperate Endeavours produce in Morality an habitual Temperance, or Natural Qualities dispose to Natural Forms, by a natural and necessary Connection, or as if by a supervening adjutorial power of Gods Spirit, moral Vertues and common Graces did lose their specifick Forms, and were materially wrought up into an higher Species, and transformed into Spiritual and special Graces: but these imperfect things through the ordination and assistance of God, and by a moral connection, are blessed and crowned with Perfection, and are ordinarily conditions presupposed in us to ren-

der us capable Subjects of habitual and special Graces, and concur to the production of them, like Sacramental Causes to their Effects, only from Gods Institution, and the conjunction of his Gracious Presence with them. And 'tis manifest from the Parable of the indebted servant, who obtained forgiveness *because he asked*, that an act which doth not proceed from an accepted justified person, though it be not acceptable and pleasing, may yet be the condition or occasion moving God to an act of special Grace. And I am sure of this, if acts of moral Virtues and common Graces do not Please God as acts of special and sanctifying Graces do, yet they do not Provoke him as acts of habituate Vices do; and the further we are from Provoking God, the nearer we are to Please him.

Señ. 21. Methinks our Saviours reddition of and inference from the Parable of the Steward which wasted his Lords goods, fully evinceth, that the faithful employment of the abilities and Gifts of Nature, and common Grace, and Providence, will be propitious, and contribute influence towards a capacity for spiritual and special abilities and Graces. *Make (saith he) to your selves friends of the unrighteous Mammon, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He then that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in that which is another mans, who shall give you that which is your*

own? Luk. 16. from 9. to 13. That is, lesser Gifts well improved are a means to befriend us to obtain greater: and if we are faithful in smaller matters, the same Principle will incline us to be so in greater: but if we are unfaithful in lesser, God will not commit to us greater Trusts. If we abuse Gifts of a present temporal concern, God will not intrust us with Gifts of a future spiritual concern: for if men abuse those Gifts which they have as Stewards, only for a time, there can be no engaging motive offered to confer upon them those Gifts which men are to have as Proprieties for ever. So that it seems most plain and evident to me, that there is a certain connexion betwixt the collation of superiour Gifts and the good use of Gifts of an inferiour nature. And when Christ commands us *to strive to enter in at the strait gate*, (Luk. 13. 24. *to labour for the meat which endureth to eternal Life*, Joh. 6, 24. and promiseth that *he which cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out*. Joh. 6. 37. *that is, will certainly receive and accept*; I say in these Scriptures Christ plainly intimateth, that God will not ordinarily give spiritual and heavenly Graces without the mediation of our faithful Endeavours; and if we do engage ourselves in good earnest, and lay out the utmost All within us to seek after Spiritual and Heavenly Gifts and Graces, our labour in probability shall not be in vain. The Reasons of my Position are these:

Sect. 22. Reas. 1. Because the faithful employment of the abilities and Gifts aforesaid is by God decreed and ordained to this end. And God who is infinitely wise, great and good, brings every thing to that period and perfection to which he doth design and determine it. God doth not impose Duty upon us only in Sovereignty, as a meer Task to try and exercise our Subjection and Obedience, but in Goodness and Mercy also, as a means in order to our Benefit and Comfort, *Deut.* 8, 16. and 6. 24. and 10. 13. *Joh.* 3. 17. *Tit.* 2. 11. Hence that Maxim in the Schools, *omne officium est propter beneficium*. And accordingly when we do a thing which God commands, 'tis not accepted and rewarded simply and meerly because commanded, but because in doing it we act becomingly, acquit our selves agreeably to the ducture of that Reason and Judgment which God hath planted and enlightened within us to direct us to the acknowledgment of our dependance upon him, subjection to him, and the pursuit of those things which make for our own perfection and Happiness. Though we do a thing in it self very good, and strictly commanded of God, yet if we do it not from conscience of duty to God, and perhaps as commodious and profitable to our selves, it will not be accepted with God: for every command implyeth a promise, and consequently every duty

duty implyeth a reward, and therefore 'tis almost if not quite as essential to a duty to respect Gods Bounty, as his Sovereignty, *Heb. 11. 6.* And to look to the End for which, as well as to the Warrant from which it is to be done. And certainly God which encourageth our hope in case we perform a Duty, will accomplish to us the end we hope for by a Duty.

Sect. 23. Indeed the connection (as we formerly intimated) betwixt our faithful employment of the abilities and Gifts of Nature and common Grace, and our obtaining an estate in spiritual and special abilities and Graces, doth not arise from any Merit or considerable worth and obligingness in our faithful Diligence, nor is it strictly and properly the natural production or the result and force of any strength and virtue in the faithful exercise of our natural and common abilities and Graces: but it is from Gods gracious vouchsafement, and from the mighty and irresistible force and virtue of Gods decree which do here interpose themselves for our good, and unto which God will subject himself as to Laws and Rules of his own making and establishment in his dispensations towards us. Hence that of the Psalmist, *thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* (*Psa. 138. 2.* that is, God hath and will subject all his glorious Attributes to his gracious Promise.

to that word of his which is gone forth out of his mouth to serve and bleſs the children of men, which *walk uprightly before him. Pſ. 84. 11.* I do not believe that Gods diſpenſations of Grace are allured by mans moral goodneſs, or that his gracious purpoſes are ſo bound up to mans good behaviour that he can do good to no man upon other terms: but ordinarily, and according to Gods revealed will, his ſtated rule and promiſe of communicatings to us, ſuch a Demeanour and qualification as we have been ſpeaking of, fits man to receive higher Grace, and puts God into an honourable capacity, if I may ſay ſo, to beſtow Grace upon man. And if God will perfect and crown our faithful moral Diligence, and imperfectly good Endeavours, with ſuch a bleſſed ſucceſs, who ſhall ſay unto him why doſt thou ſo? God hath ſaid, *that the diligent hand maketh rich, Prov. 10. 4.* and may not God grant in Spiritual matters as well as in Temporal, what Privileges and Prerogatives to Diligence He pleaſeth? *Eccleſ. 1. 3.*

ſect. 24. Reaſ. 2. Becauſe God in love to Judgment meaſures his Rectoral Adminiſtrations by the rules of Equity, and proportioneth his Acceptance and Rewards of Service done him anſwerably to the Abilities of thoſe which perform it. This is the purport of ſeveral texts of Scripture; *unto whomſoever much is given, of him*

him shall much be required. *Luk. 12, 48.* God giveth to all, but not in the same measure: some have five talents, others two, others one. And the Accounts of each shall be answerable to his Receipts. He that hath received but one Talent, shall be accountable but for one; for God doth not expect to reap where he strewed not, as 'tis in this Parable: *but he layeth judgment to the Line, and righteousness to the Plummets, Isa. 28. 17.* and will *summa equitate jus reddere*, render to every one in a rational way; according to an equitable proportion. That is, God expects much from him to whom he hath committed much, and but little from him to whom he committed but a little. And answerably in this distribution of Favours and Rewards he proceeds by a Geometrical and not by an Arithmetical proportion: he which by his diligence improved two Talents to four, found as favourable an acceptance as he which improved five to ten: there was the same Consideration and as much Reason, that he which had improved two Talents should be commended and rewarded, as there was that the other should, who had improved five; for, all things considered, the one had done as much as the other.

Señ. 25. Our Saviour said of the poor Widow which cast two mites into the Treasury, *that she cast in more than all they which cast in much.* *Mar. 14. 42, 43, 44.* What she cast in

was not simply and absolutely in it self, and according to Arithmetical proportion more than all that which they cast in, nor yet so much; but considering her Ability and the readiness of her mind and according to Geometrical proportion it was more; for they could have given greater matters out of their greater estates but she that gave all could give no more; and therefore she gave More, respectively to Gods Acceptance and commendation, than all the rest. The *Apostle* speaks full to our purpose, *If there be first* (saith he) *a willing mind* (that is, if a man be sincerely willing either actively or passively to perform a signal service to God, and be ready to go forward with the work, but through a deficiency of strength, means or opportunity cannot actually accomplish it, he shall not be rejected for such a deficiency but God will accept the Will for the Deed; for as it followeth, *a man is accepted according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not.* Cor 8. 12. that is, God measureth and regardeth a man proportionably to the employment of his particular ability, and if he go as far as he can towards performance of service to him, he finds as favourable acceptance with him as he would have done, if he had actually performed it in circumstances of more abilities, assistances and opportunities.

Seet. 26. The frequent appeals which God makes to our reasoning Faculty, to judge and de-

determine of the Rational Equity of his way of dealing with us, is a convictive evidence, That in all his Administrations towards us, he observes a rational Equity and Proportion, and never doth any thing which bears any way hard upon the Principle of Reason, and Rule of equitable Dealings: so that, when men, plac'd under the Gospel, and assisted by God, do their utmost to please God in a way of Nature and common Grace, faithfully comport with, and follow the light and ducture of their natural Understandings and Reasons, and diligently and conscienciously go along with God in the use of the Means of Spiritual and special Grace prescribed and enjoyned by him, they do that which is of such consideration and account in the sight of God, that they are in a ready way to obtain from him, answerably to their capacities, Spiritual and special Abilities and Graces.

Señ. 27. Men that dye in their sins, and are damned for their sins, are so far from doing their best, that they seem to do the worst they can to hinder their Conversion: *they hated knowledge, the fear of the Lord they chused not, they would none of my counsel, they despised all my rebuke,* Prov. i. 20, 30. Though their estate be never so bad, they like and love it as if it were best of all, Jer. 5. 31. and prefer it before a state of Grace, John 3. 19. And accordingly
you

you shall find, the Equity of Gods Justice in rejecting men from Grace, and condemning them to Punishment, is no where said to be founded on any natural or invincible want of power in them to attain Grace and prevent Destruction; but 'tis alwayes charged on the faultiness of their Wills, *Prov. 1. 24. to 32. Luk. 13, 34. Job. 5. 40. Act. 7. 5.* Implying, that if men did awaken those Principles of Light, Understanding and Judgment which God vouchsafeth to them, and stir up their executive powers to joyn issue with the gracious assistances of Gods Spirit for the pursuance of that Grace and mercy which God offereth to them, they might have avoided the evil portion of Sinners, and have partaked of an inheritance amongst the Saints in Light.

Señ. 28. Reas. 3. Because God delights to discover the kindness and bountifulness of his disposition towards the children of men. There is in God *ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία*, a goodness and love towards Men, as the Apostle tells you, *Tit. 3. 4.* The Nature of which affections dispose him to communicate favours and Gifts to us. From hence he preventeth us with the blessings of Goodness, as the Psalmist speaketh, *Pf. 21. 3. And so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son &c.* We are all the off-spring of God, said the Apostle, from the Heathen Poet, *Act. 17. 28.* And nothing is more natural to him than to sup-

support and cherish the productions and free effluxes of his own omnipotent Love and goodness. Hence St. Peter calleth him *faithful Creator*, and willeth us upon that account to *commit our selves to him in well-doing*. 1 Pet. 4. 19. Implying, that Gods relation to us as our Creator, is a kind of natural promisory engagement upon him to protect, preserve, and do us good when we deport our selves towards him as becometh rational Creatures. And we find that *Job* represented and complained of it as a very incongruous thing, as a thing unbecoming the relation of a Creator to a Creature, to make it as it were purposely to destroy it, without the consideration of any notable unrighteousness in it, or provocation from it. *Thine hands have made me and fashioned me round about, and yet thou dost destroy me* Job 10, 8. q. d. Thy Making of me promised Preservation, provision, and goodness from thee, and wilt thou [yet] notwithstanding the natural obligation of that relation ruine me for thy meer pleasure? and you shall find that God doth often insist upon the consideration of his Relation to his people as their Creator, to suggest and inculcate to them from thence his regular and due care, yea, his tender love and abundant goodness and bounty towards them *Isa.* 44. 2. 45. 11. 46. 3, 4. 49, 15. God is not only merciful and gracious, but he is the *Father of Mercies*,
1 Cor.

1 Cor. 1. 3. *and waiteth to be gracious.* **Isa 30, 18.** that is, 'tis natural to God to be ready to acts of mercy, and Mercy so pleaseth him, **Mic. 7. 18.** that he looketh out and seeketh for, yea, watcheth and waiteth for a fair opportunity to exalt his mercy in the gracious succour and relief of poor miserable sinners endeavouring all they can to seeek and find him.

Sect. 29. Our Saviour exhorting his Hearers in his Sermon on the Mount, *to pray for the Spirit*, (that is, the good Gifts and Graces of the Spirit our Discourse relateth unto) encourageth them to believe that their Prayer shall be prevalent and effectual, from the consideration, *now before us, viz. that God is their Father*; that is, because their Beings are originally from Him as Children are from a Father. And the strength of his Argument standeth in a comparison, and is drawn from the less to the greater; *If ye then* (saith he) *being evil* (that is, degenerated in a great measure from that kindness and benignity which was once impressed upon your Natures : for *Evil* here is opposed to a Liberal Disposition, and a forwardness to Help and Relieve when requested) *know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good gifts* (another Evangelist saith, *His Spirit*, **Luke 9. 13.**) *unto them that ask him*, **Matt. 7. 11.** For as the Psalmist reasoneth in another

another case, *He that made the eye, shall not he see? and he that planted the ear, shall not he hear?* *Psal. 94. 9.* So, shall not God, who hath only copied out his own Bowels, Love, and Goodness, in dark Characters upon Men, investing their Natures with such Principles which incline and carry them forth to acts of Kindness and Bounty, shew Himself to be much more full of Kindness and Bounty; and answerably bestow upon all such as diligently and faithfully serve him, according to the utmost of their Capacities and Circumstances, that which is best for them?

Señ. 30. Optimus & Maximus, Most Good or Bountiful, and Most Great or Powerful, were two Attributes which the ancient Gentiles most especially ascribed unto God, and they ever gave, from the dictate of Nature, his Goodness or Bounty the precedence of his Greatness or Power, implying, That God principally looks after the manifestation and acknowledgment of That. And the truth is, God never acts more like himself, with greater Royalty and Magnificence, than when he gives ample Gifts unto Men, and rewards their Services above the strict Worth and natural Value of them; for hereby, as in a Glass, is represented a Scheme of his excellent Greatness, and the design he hath to affect us with awful apprehensions of his Greatness and Excellency. We say, There

There is no service to the service of a King, because such a service is not recompensed in proportion to its proper worth, but in proportion to the Greatness and Munificence of the Prince which gives the Recompense. As Alexander said when he gave one a greater gift than he desired or expected, Non quero quid te accipere deceat, sed quid me dare. He considered more what was fit for him to give, than what was fit for the other to receive. So 'tis here, when we obtain from God spiritual and special, upon the faithful employment of natural and common Abilities and Graces, God gives in a way of proportion to his own unbounded Goodness and Majestick Munificence, rather than in a way of suitableness to the nature and value of the thing rewarded. That of God to St. Paul may be applied to the case in hand, My strength is made perfect (that is, declared to be perfect) in weakness, 2. Cor. 12. 9. And elsewhere, we have this treasure in earthen Vessels, that the Power might be (that is, clearly appear to be) of God, and not of Us. 2 Cor. 4. 7. so here, God hath engaged himself to such a dispensation as we have under consideration, that his Love and Goodness, Care and Providence, Greatness and Munificence towards us, may appear and be made know to the World in greater exaltation and splendor.

Sec̃. 31. Reas. 4. Because God will justifie himself most triumphantly in all the judgments and punishments which he inflicts on obstinate sinners. *Let God be true* (saith the Apostle) *and every man a lyar, as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and overcome when thou art judged,* Rom. 3. 4. The place refers to *Psalms* 51. 4. where it is thus read, *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest,* Psal. 51. 4. which words are to be understood in a forensick sense; for *δικαιωδης* used by the Apostle for the Hebrew word *Titzdak in Kal*, signifieth that thou may'st appear to be just, as one acquitted upon Tryal doth: and *νικηεις*, signifieth such a contention as a Party in a Law-suit maketh when Judgment ensueth. And *νικηεις*, such a sort of overcoming and victory as a contending Party obtains when he carries the Cause in Judicature. And the import of the words is this; Suppose God should be questioned concerning his proceedings in his condemnation of impenitent and obdurate Sinners, he will so manage his Cause, and make such provision against all Inditements and Impleadings, that he will be sure to have the better of the day: and whatsoever Bills of Inditements he prefers against his Adversaries, whatsoever Rebellions he chargeth upon them, whatsoever Sentence he passeth against them, whatsoe-

ver penalty and torments he inflicteth upon them, and of what nature soever his proceedings against them be, they shall be managed on such unquestionable terms and rules of Equity and Justice, that they shall not be able to plead any matter of Defence, Apology, or Excuse for themselves.

Sect. 32. Now nothing will render Sinners more inexcusable in the day of Judgment for deserting and refusing the Service of God, and more clearly illustrate and justify the righteousness of that punishment thereupon inflicted on them, than this consideration; That God had plainly declared, that he would not in any degree by any Person whatsoever be served for nought, but did constantly from time to time assure them, either by his Words, or Works, or both, that their meanest Services, the most imperfect and weak, should be rewarded with a liberal and full hand, exceedingly above the just value of them and (did not his Decree, promise, or bountifulness of his Disposition intervene in his consideration) above all reasonable expectation concerning them. If men could plead that they had not an Interest of their own to account upon, and carry on in their tradings with their Talents, or employing their Abilities and Gifts to the purposes for which they have received them, they might have some pretence for hiding and suppressing them; for Rational Creatures will
not

not think it good for them to be engaged in doing that which will do them no good when it is done: but God having inseparably linked our interest to our duties, and animated our hopes by our diligence, we can find no matter of excuse, but shall be speechless in the day of God. *Have I been a Wilderuess unto Israel* (saith God) *or a Land of darknes?* wherefore say my people then, we are Lords: we will come no more unto thee? Jer. 2, 31. q. d. If when they served me I had done them no good, but hurted them rather, then they might have some provocation and pretence to assume to themselves power to dispose of themselves and services to the neglect and contempt of my interest in them, and expectation of service from them.

Sect. 33. And God seems contented that men should renounce him and his service if men could find out a way to employ themselves to purposes of greater Advantage to themselves, than that they are already possessed of, by keeping to him and his service, as that of God by his Prophet *Elijah* intimateth, when he said, *How long halt ye between two?* (that is, why are you so indifferent, neutral, and undetermined in your inclinations to whom and whose service to adhere unto and abide by? why, like a man which halts, do you bend and incline sometimes on the right hand, and sometimes on the left; now are for one Religion, and anon are

for another; sometimes for the worship of *Baal*, the Idol of the *Zidonians*, and sometimes for the worship of the true God, the God of Israel?) *if Baal be God then follow him* (that is, if he be the author of your Protections and Mercies, and if you have sufficient grounds and reasons to induce you to expect from him greater rewards by serving him than you can expect by serving the true God, than deal with him as faithful servants with their Lord and Master, who follow him wheresoever he goes, and do whatsoever he requires, be resolved men and determine your Service and Worship unto him, and be for him and not for another:) *but if the Lord be God then follow Him*, 1 King. 18. 21. That is, if there be none so good in himself, and so good to you as the true God, as there is not: if the service of the same God be the best Service, more agreeable to your rational Principles and most subservient to your truest and biggest interest; then let the Lord be your God and follow him fully, and forsaking all other cleave only to him, and to his Worship and Service, or else you will be condemned of your selves. So that, the bountifulness of Gods disposition towards his servants and the experience the world hath of the richness of those rewards which he offereth unto, and confers upon men, to encourage them to serve him, will with an high hand justifie the vengeance

geance he taketh and executeth on the disobedient and impenitent.

Sect. 34. Could the unfaithful servant which hid his Talent spoken of in this Parable, to which my Text refers have pleaded, that he had not a competent ability or such a sufficiency of power to employ and improve his Talent as his fellow Servant had, or that it was impossible for him to please and content his Lord and Master by the employment and improvement of it as they did, or that he should have lost his labour to all such like advantages as his fellows hoped for and were rewarded with, he could have made a rational apology and justifiable excuse for his sloth and negligence: but *that every mouth may be stopped and all the World* (that is, of impenitent and obstinate sinners) *may become guilty before God*, [or be subject to the Judgment of God] as the old translation rendred it) upon justifiable and equitable terms, *Rom. 3, 19.* God hath given assurance that the lowest sort of reasonable services, if men serve him with a moral sincerity, do their best endeavour to please him, they may be enabled to do that which will in some degree be acceptable to him, and useful to themselves.

Sect. 35. Reas. 5. Because otherwise the express and literal promulgation of the Gospel-dispensation; could not be such a peculiar favour and special mercy to a people as it is,

For, not working upon us physically, by a natural influx, as fire warmeth us or meat nourisheth us, but morally, by a rational influx, as it represents intelligible and alluring objects of Truth and goodness to affect our understandings and Wills, it is no otherwise a ministration of Salvation to us, than it is that instrument or means by which Gods Spirit moveth and exciteth our understandings and hearts, and conveyeth influence and efficacy to rectifie our mistakes, estimations, choices, affections and prosecutions, which is done by an active interposition and exercise of our own natural Abilities and common Graces: for unless our faculties and gifts be awakened, stirred up, and exercised, unless we have Eyes to see, Ears to hear, Understandings to apprehend and attend, Memories to receive and retain, Judgments to discern and consider, Wills and Affections to embrace and pursue, the revelations of Duty, Grace and Mercy propoundeth to us, no saving Effect can thereby be impressed and wrought upon us. All the Powers of the Gospel are like sanative Medicines, which lye by a sick man unapplied, ineffective to any saving good to us, till we apply our selves to the use of them, and do what we can to subject our selves to the workings of them.

Seet. 36. The weightiest matters in the World, yea, those which most nearly concern
us,

us, which are most necessary, profitable, delightful and contentful, do not affect us if we think not of them: the noblest Rewards of infinite Grace, *Heaven and Happiness*, do no more allure us, than the smiles of a *Varlet*, if we think not of them: the highest Punishments of infinite Justice, the *Horrorours and Torments of Hell and Damnation*, do no more affright us, than the frowns of a dying wretch, if we think not of them: the Commands and Example of Christ have no more force with us, and do no more encourage and quicken us to Obedience, and the pursuit of Glory, than those of the *Great Mogul*, which we never saw or heard of, unless we think of them. Our Souls indeed are active Principles, and will be working on something or other, and the end of our Reason is to put us upon the consideration of such matters as are most excellent, and necessary, and which do chiefly concern our Eternal welfare: but our thoughts are so much under the power and command of our Wills, that we ordinarily employ them about what Objects we please: we send them hither and thither, busie them about this thing and that, call them off, and bring them on, determine and fix them how and where we please; so that, the faithful employment of our natural Abilities and common Graces is a condition presupposed to the reaping of a saving

benefit from the promulgation of the Gospel to us. *Perceive ye not yet* (said our Saviour to his Disciples upon their unbelieving reasonings) *neither understand? having eyes see ye not? having Ears hear ye not? and do ye not remember?* Mar. 8. 17. 18. *q. d.* If you do not make a regular use of your Understandings and Senses, all that I say and do, both my Words and Works will be as a thing of naught with you: the Doctrine which I preach to you unless you attend and consider it, and the miracles which I work to confirm it, and to convince you of the truth of it, unless you observe and remember them, cannot be transferred to their proper use, and work any good upon you: and when your rational Faculties and Senses are not thus employed, they are to you as if you had them not, vain and useless *Matt.* 13. 13.

Seet. 37. In this consists the great advantage the Christian part of the World hath from the Preaching of the Gospel, that by it, *Life and Immortality is brought to Light*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. That is, to partake of a divine Life, and to attain immortal Felicity, and Glory is distinctly, plainly, and evidently, discovered and manifested by it: and withal it is the *ministration of the Spirit*, 1 Cor. 3. 8. That is, containeth such spiritual Powers, such quickening Influences from the Spirit, such efficacious

cious Arguments, and perswasive Motives, as are most apt to affect and incite our Spirits or rational Faculties to the exercise of their proper offices and acts for to embrace and pursue that divine Life and immortal Glory, which is so clearly discovered and offered to us by it. *God knew that Sin had unman'd us, lost us the use of our Reason, where we had most use for it; and therefore he contrived this means both to pardon our Sin, and to recover to us our Reason, and to make us men againe. Yea, the very graces of the Spirit, are to make us more unreasonable.* For those inherent Graces of the Spirit which we call sanctifying and saving Graces, are a rectifying of our natural rational Faculties, and make such impressions on them as bring them into a due order, subordinate our Understandings and Reasons to God, and our Wills, Appetites, Affections, Passions and Senses to our Understandings and Reasons, and that which facilitateth or maketh them fit and ready to operate suitably to the Nature of their proper Objects: for all habits whatsoever, both Spiritual and Moral, are nothing else almost but a facilitation of our rational Faculties, and are scarce otherwise distinguished from the natural Powers in which they are, than the straitness of a stick from the stick it self, or the expansion and contraction of the hand from the hand

it

it self, not by a positive absolute Being and Existence of its own, but as the modification or ordering of a Being after such a manner, is distinguished from the Being it self. So that, the literal Promulgation of the Gospel to us, carrieth with it a peculiarity of Favour and Mercy, because it is the most excellent Instrument to excite us to a regular use of our natural Faculties, and the most efficacious Organ of the Spirit to derive to us a Divine and Heavenly Life.

Sec. 38. Reas. 6. Because God hath rewarded those which have been serviceable to him only for the execution of his Will of Purpose to punish, and such as have only hypocritically fulfilled his Will of Command, with the highest temporal Rewards; and therefore we have good ground to hope more comfortably and confidently that he will reward those more abundantly and excellently, even with Spiritual and Special Gifts and Graces, which with a moral Sincerity do to the utmost of their Power accomplish and fulfill his Will of Command. *Behold, your heavenly Father (saith Christ) feedeth the Fowls of the Aire! are ye not much better than they? he cloatheth the grass of the Field, and will he not much more cloath you? Mat. 6. 26. 30. q. d.* If things of lesser worth partake of his Care and Bounty, things of a greater Excellency shall much more, in a higher

er measure. Which speech is reducible to that which is under our Consideration, and may in my apprehension be as fitly applyed to it as to that to which it was immediately referred.

Señ. 39. Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon and his Army of Caldeans, were the worst of the Heathen, as the Prophet saith, Ezek. 7. 24. And they, comparatively, but bruta Instrumenta in Gods hand: they did not knowingly and designedly, from any Conscience of Obedience to God, or aim at his Honour and Service, execute his Judgments upon his Enemies, but did what they did from their own impetuous Lusts, to serve their own evil Purposes and Ends; and yet because they were subservient to Gods Providence in executing the Punishment he had decreed against Tyrus, he rewarded them very highly, gave them one of the greatest and richest Kingdomes in the World. Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, caused his Army to serve a great Service against Tyrus: every Head was made bald, and every Shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages nor his Army for Tyrus, for the Service that he had served against it. For when the Tyrians saw their imminent danger, they transported, as St. Hierome relates, their choicest Goods to Carthage, and other neighbouring Islands, and at length deserted their City, and left nothing but empty and ruined houses
and

and Walls to their Enemies. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold I will give the Land of Ægypt unto Nebuchadrezzer King of Babylon, and he shall take her Multitude, and take her Spoil, and take her Prey, and it shall be the Wages for his Army. I have given him the Land of Ægypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord. (Ezek. 29. 18, 19, 20.) Howbeit they meant not to fulfill Gods Will, and to execute his Purpose, neither did their Hearts think so: they had no Apprehensions that they were working for God and serving his design: but it was in their Hearts to destroy and cut off, as 'tis elsewhere. Isa. 10. 5. yet because they were instrumental to execute Gods decreed Punishment, and to serve his Ends upon the Tyrians, they shall not lose their Labour.

Sect. 4c. So, although Cyrus King of Persia were an Heathenish Idolater, yet because he performed all Gods Pleasure, accomplished all that he purposed as necessary for the Redemption of his People from the Babylonish captivity, he held his right hand to subdue Nations, and loosed the loins of Kings before him — and gave him the Treasures of Darknes and hidden Riches of secret Places. Isa. 44. 28. 45. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Jehu was none of the best, for he never departed from the Sins of Jeroboam, from the Idolatrous

latrous Worship of the Golden Calves in Bethel and Dan, and took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; yet because he pretended a Zeal for the true God, in executing the Command of God to destroy Ahab's Family and the Idolatrous Worship and Priests of Baal, God rewarded him largely, and his Posterity too for his sake; *Because thou hast done well in executing that which was Right in mine Eyes* (that is, in part that which was Right, a thing good in its Kind and Nature, being materially agreeable to my law) *and hast done unto the house of Ahab all that was in my Heart, thy Children of the fourth Generation shall sit upon the Throne of Israel.* 2 King. 10. 30. And what God graciously promised was faithfully accomplished in the successions to the Throne of Jehoaahaz, ch. 31. 1. Joash, ch. 13. 9. Jeroboam, ch. 14. 16. and Zachariah ch. 14. 29.

SECT. 41. Now may we not rationally infer, that if God so graciously and bountifully rewarded such as ignorantly and preterintentionally, without having any respect at all to God and his Ends, became serviceable to him in the execution of his Will of Purpose, in a particular Instance, to gratifie their own carnal Appetites and Ends; and such as hypocritically and partially yield an outward conformity to his Will of Command, to serve their
own

own Lusts and interest upon his bounty, that he will much more amply and liberally recompense those which knowingly, purposely, universally and uprightly endeavour, as much as meere natural men in a state of declension can, a conformity to His holy, just and good Will of command. With the Upright man God will shew himself Upright; God will not altogether neglect a plain, honest, faithful exercise of Moral Virtues, and common Graces, as he does not neglect the practice of true Piety, but *he will give the Labourers their hire, to every man his proper penny*, Matt. 20. 8. 9. will as we may reasonably infer, bless, and prosper the one, as he certainly does the other after their kind, not according to their own worthiness, but, according to his abundant Goodness and Mercy; and his Liberality in rewarding the one which hath laboured less worthily than the other shall be no prejudice to his Faithfulness, Goodness, or Righteousness, in rewarding the other.

Sect. 42. If the humiliation of a *Ninive*, *Jon.* 3. 7, 10. of an *Ahab*, 2 *King.* 30. 30. be a consideration for the removal and adjournal of Judgments and the collation of temporal Blessings, may not that man have encouragement to hope for Spiritual and Special Blessings from God who seriously resolves in all good Conscience to avoid and shun all
gross,

gross, wilfull, and habituate Wickedness, and to apply himself with all his might to keep every one of Gods Commandements? if God said to a bloody *Cain*, *if thou do'st well shalt thou not be accepted?* Gen. 4. 7. and heard a scoffing *Ismael* when he *cryed unto him*; Gen. 21. 17. and told a brutish *Nebuchadrezzar*, *that if he brake off his Sin by Righteousness, and his Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor, it should be a lengthening of his Tranquillity*; Dan. 4. 27. will he not hear and accept every person in every Nation which feareth him and worketh Righteousness? Act 10. 39.

Sect. 43. I am not willing (my Conscience is witness, and God which is greater than my Conscience, and knoweth more by me than it) to impose upon the Faith or Reason of any, the meanest Person in the world; but methinks, when I thus consider Gods ordinary practice of Grace in conferring rewards upon the lowest sorts of Service imaginable done for him, that it is not illogical, or a far fetched Inference to conclude from thence, that he will more liberally and honourably reward those Services which are done from better Principles, to better Ends, and more agreeably to his holy Will and Pleasure, and which do *ex natura rei*, repress in some measure the Exorbitancy of mens Lusts and Passions, and materially Dispose, and prepare them for greater

er Blessings, even for those Spiritual and Special Gifts and Graces our discourse refers unto.

Before I shall draw any inferences from my Position I shall endeavour to remove two Objections which are by some men made against it.

Sect. 44. First. Some will not have unregenerate men encouraged to moral Vertues and common Graces, because they are apt to be proud of, and to rest in them; and from thence assert, that there is more hope of the Conversion and Salvation of the most debauched Ruffian, than of such men. When men (say they) by the external Practice of moral Vertues have obtained good Acceptance, and a great Reputation in the World, and by the internal workings of common Graces, which have the semblance of Faith and Repentance, have got a good Opinion of themselves, and conceit their present course commendable, and in Probability safe, they from hence trust in their own Righteousness, and so lay the strongest and most dangerous barr in the way to a through Conversion and the true Power of Godliness, that can be; and therefore (say they) to excite to endeavour after moral Vertues and common Graces, is to perswade them to become like the Profelytes to the *Pharisees*, more the *Chil-*

Children of the Devil than they were before.

Seç. 45. Ans. This kind of reasoning hath more of noise and clamour in it than of Substance and Strength; for Pride and carnal Confidence is neither an Effect, or necessary Adjunct; but a meer accidental thing to moral Vertues and common Graces; for nothing can be more contrary to the dictates of Reason and the common restraints of Grace, than such Pride and Confidence. What is more unreasonable than Pride and Self-conceitedness? and what tendency hath a sense of Sin and Misery, and an hope of Grace and Mercy, which are the effects of common Grace, to a trusting and a reposing of our selves in our own Worth and Righteousness? that moral Vertues and common Graces are sometimes a dangerous temptation doth not proceed *ex naturis rerum*, from the natures of the things themselves, but *ex vitiis personarum quibus insunt*, from the immoral Corruptions of the persons which partake of them. So that, 'tis a casual contingent argument and may altogether as plausibly be urged against Spiritual and Special Abilities and Graces, because men are apt to take occasion to be proud of them and to trust in them, as the Instances of *David*, *Hezekiah*, *Peter* and others, evince.

St. *Austin*, and after him the Schoolmen;
E
when

when they define *Gratia gratum faciens*, that Grace which we are speaking of, regenerating or sanctifying Grace, they teach us, that it is such, *Quà nemo malè utitur*, which no one useth amiss. But 'tis of easie apprehension, that they speak of Grace efficiently and not objectively considered: for though sanctifying Grace cannot in its exercise be abused to evil Purposes, yet it may accidentally by its presence and practice both be an occasion of drawing out of those Lusts which war against our Souls, and so may objectively be misused. But suppose it were constantly and necessarily true, that moral Vertues and common Graces were accompanied with Pride and carnal confidence, is it not more easie to cast out one or two Devils than to cast out a whole Legion? and are not one or two Enemies more easily vanquished than an whole Army?

Seç. 46. Secondly, Some others, because the Apostle saith, *where Sin abounded Grace did much more abound*, Rom. 5. 20. Infer against our Position, that therefore *Quò scelestior eò gratiæ vicinior*, by how much the more any man is a Sinner, by so much the nearer to the Grace and Mercy of a Saviour. And because Jesus Christ told the Priests and Elders, *that the Publicans and Harlots did go into the Kingdom of God before them*, Mat. 21. 31.

There-

Therefore say they, the excess of wickedness is a better qualification to make men capable Subjects of regenerating Grace, than moral Vertues and common Graces.

Señ. 47. Ans. This Objection seemeth to intimate to us, that God doth Love that which Nature it self doth Loath; and as if that were nearest to God which is furthest from Goodness; and that they which are more like Devils than men, were most likely to become Christians; and Heaven were beholding to Hell for Saints. I cannot but think, that *Agrippa, who was almost perswaded to be a Christian*, was better disposed towards Christianity than *Saul was when he breathed out threatenings and slaughters against any that professed it.* Acts 9. 1. 2. and certainly the *Scribe which was not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mar. 12. 34. was fitter for and nearer to an entrance into it, than those *Scribes, Pharisees and Hypocrites were who did shut the Kingdom of Heaven against others, and would not go in themselves, nor suffer those who were entring, to go in.* Mat. 23. 13. And the *Young man which had observed all the Commandements of God from his youth up, and yet lacked one thing*, Mar. 10. 21. was not so much indisposed to the Power of Religion, and so unmeet for the Kingdom of God, as *Ahab was when he sold himself to work Evil in the sight of the Lord*; 1 King. 21. 20. or

any other which wanteth more things and rejecteth the Commandements of God, and hath no fear of God before his eyes, and speaketh against the Holy Ghost. Hof. 4. 6. Rom. 3. 18, Mat. 12. 32. or as he who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholý thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Heb. 10. 29. For my part I cannot believe, that he is ever likely to become a Saint who lives as if he were a Devil, renouncing the dictates of Nature and the restraints of Grace. Surely a just and an honest man is more nearly related to a Christian than a Thief, or an Oppressor, or a Deceiver; and he that walketh humbly, meekly, soberly, charitably, instructing the Ignorant, relieving the Poor, extending compassions to the Prisoners, and captives, acknowledging his unworthiness by reason of Sin, begging Pardon of God, and falleth down and worshippeth God in hope of Reconciliation and Salvation, as every one man doth which liveth in the practice of moral Vertues and common Graces, is more likely to become a sound Believer, than he which walketh proudly, stubbornly, riotously, faring deliciously every day, without regard to the hungry and needy, scorning at Godliness and Honesty, and despising the means of Grace and Mercy. I shall
con-

conclude with the recital of the concurrent suffrage of the *Profound Bradwardine*, *A servile fear* (saith he) *a sight of some inconvenience and the moral habit of Vertue, do very much withhold from Sin, incline to good Works, and so prepare and dispose to Charity, and Grace, and Works truly pleasing and acceptable.* Bradw. De Causa Dei. l. 16. c. 37. With whom Mr. Robert Bolton consented, who saith, *that moral Honesty and outward Religiousness are in themselves good and necessary, and a good step to Christianity.* I now proceed to consider what Inferences and Consequences are deducible from my Position.

Se^t. 48. First then, the Reason why so few are spiritually converted and saved, is, because few do faithfully employ their Natural Abilities and common Graces; or in the words of our Saviour, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand; and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of *Isaias*, which saith, *by hearing they shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing they shall see and not perceive: for this peoples Heart is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes have they closed, lest at any time they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and should understand with their Hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* Mat. 13. 13, 14, 15. q. d. They have

Faculties and Powers naturally capable of observing and understanding the *Miracles* I have wrought amongst them, and the *Doctrine* I have preached to them, and of receiving blessed Advantages from them; but they have not stirred up themselves to the use of them this way, but have carryed it as if they had neither Ears to hear what was said, nor Eyes to see what was done, nor reasonable Souls to perceive the End unto which both as Means referred; and they are just such another sort of People as they were which the Prophet speaks of, who were so judicially besotted by the predominancy of an obstinate stubborn Will, that they wilfully stop their Ears, and shut their Eyes, and run on like mad Men upon their Ruine and Destruction: they so perversely abuse their natural Abilities and common Graces, as if they purposely signed to render themselves indisposed for, and incapable of Conversion and Salvation; and by the just Judgment of God for their neglect and contempt of the means of Conversion and Salvation, are so confirmed and hardened in their brutish Stupidity and Sensualities, that they are never likely to become stirring and active in the use of their natural Abilities and gracious Assistances, and therefore never likely to be converted and saved.

Sect. 49. There was never any man in the
World

World, (at least under the Gospel) who dyed in his Sins and was damned for them, which endeavoured the best he could to be saved. When God *commandeth men to repent and to be converted, that their Sins might be blotted out, Act. 3. 19. and to make a new Heart and a new Spirit, and to turn themselves that they may not dye but live*: These Commands suppose that they have Powers naturally capable of yielding Obedience to them; for otherwise these Commands would be grievous to them; and God would tempt them above what they are able, which his Justice and Goodness will not suffer him to do: and being given to unregenerate men, which are morally weakened by sinful corruptions, and with an expresse reference to their corruptions, which render them averse from and hinder the performance of Obedience to Gods Commands, they also suppose such a superabundance of gracious Power from God as is sufficient to remove this weakness, and to conquer this Hinderance of obedience; for otherwise they would not be capable Subjects of these and the like Laws, and God would exact from them that which they could not do, and would promise them forgiveness of Sin and Life upon an impossible condition, which his Graciousness and Wisdom will not suffer him to do. This (as I conceive) is the purport of the New Cove-

nant founded upon Christs Mediatorial Obedience, to relieve Man respectively to his Moral Impotency ; I mean, to vouchsafe him sufficient Means to remove the hindrances he had brought upon himself by his Wickedness, to perform the Obedience he owed to his Maker and Ruler, and to restore him to a Capacity of attaining Salvation from Sin and Misery, and to stand possessed of the Image, Favour, and Fellowship of God. And answerably, what God here commands them to do for themselves, he elsewhere promisetht that he himself will do for them, *Acts* 3. 26. and 5. 31. and 11. 18. *2 Tim.* 2. 25. *Jer.* 31. 33. and 32. 39. *Ezek.* 36. 26. Which plainly implyeth, that God gives men sufficient Abilites and Helps to do that which he commands them to do, and when they faithfully use their Talents, Abilities and Helps in order to their Conversion and Salvation, he will concurr and Work with them, and in the end derive to them, and bestow upon them, that which they laboured and wrought for. So that, if Men did go so far, and do so much as they are enabled to do, their Conversion and Salvation might certainly be accomplished.

Seet. 50. When Christ upbraided the Chief Priests and Elders for not believing St. *John the Baptist*, as the Publicans and Harlots did, *Mat.* 21. 32. He clearly intimated, that they were

were aswell appointed and fitted by Nature and Grace to believe, as the other were, and that it was meerly from their own Obstinacy that they believed not: for if they had not been in capable circumstances of believing, had not been as well furnished with Abilities, Graces, and Aids for the work as the other were, it would have been no disparagement to them not to believe as the other did. A man is not to be blamed and upbraided for that which necessarily and irresistibly befalls him: where there is no room for a Choice, there can be no just or warrantable matter of Blame and Disparagement. *Actus voluntatis est actus hominis.* In a legal and moral Construction that is not done which is not willingly done. It was therefore their Wilfulness, and not any invincible Impotency natural or moral which kept them from believing, that is, there was no hinderance to their Believing but such as was conquerable (together with Gods assistance) by the endeavours and Means they might have used.

Sect. 51. And when God commands men to *save themselves*, Act. 2. 40. I presume the words are not to be understood *formaliter* but *consecutivè*, the meaning is not, that they must be the Authors of their own Salvation, or that they must do that from which Salvation will by a natural emanation result and issue

as an effect from its proper cause, but that if they did to their utmost sincerely comport with those Abilities, Graces, and Means for Salvation which they at that time enjoyed, Salvation should undoubtedly be the necessary Consequent of it; because God by his irresistible Decree hath determined, that Salvation shall be the necessary Consequent and issue of such faithful endeavours.

Seç. 51. God considered simply and absolutely in himself is *agens liberimum*, under no Obligation as a Debtour to any Creature whatsoever, gives what Favours, when, and to whom he pleaseth: but God considered relatively to his own internal Determinations and external Administrations, may and hath brought upon himself an Obligation respectively unto Us. *Divina voluntas* (saith the great Schoolman) *licet simpliciter libera sit ad extra, ex supplicatione tamen unius actus liberi, potest necessitari ad alterum.* Although the Will of God be simply or entirely free, respectively to all external administrations towards his Creatures, yet upon the supposition of one free Act towards them, he may be necessitated to another. Thus, God having commanded Sinners to pursue the Salvation of their Souls by endeavouring conversion from Sin, and engaging themselves in the service of the Gospel, and walking worthy of him, unto all well-pleasing, he hath oblig-
ed

ed himself to furnish them with sufficient Abilities, Assistances, and Means for the expediting and fulfilling of their Duties. And having encouraged them to their Duties by propounding a Reward to their Hopes, he hath bound himself upon the performance of their Duties to accomplish to them what they aim and hope for. So that, God by an act of Sovereignty obligeth himself to an act of Grace, and by one act of Grace obligeth himself to another. Thus some interpret that of the Evangelist, *of His fulness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.* Joh. 1. 16. That is, God through Christ dispenseth to us one Grace in order to another: he doth not bestow Gifts and Graces upon us sparingly, or for once, or one turn only, but accumulath Grace to Grace; that is, when former Graces are well dispensed and rightly used, he addeth others to them, to fill up the measure of a Christian Stature, *a perfect man in the fulness of Christ*, as the Apostle terms it. Eph. 4. 13.

Seet. 53. 'Tis the observation of a Rabbin mentioned by *Casanbon*, that *Merces præcepti est præceptum, & merces transgressionis est transgressio*. The meaning is this, that when a man keepeth one commandment he obtaineth such a reward of Grace from God, that he is made able and ready to keep another, and as his diligence in obedience is increased, so his
Graces

Graces are multiplyed and perfected: so on the contrary, he which transgresseth one of Gods Commands, by Gods just Judgment is disposed to transgress another, and as his negligence to Obedience increaseth, so his aversion from Obedience is heightened.

Seet, 54. Surely, God which hath appointed a course of Means in order to Conversion and for the acquisition of Salvation, and strictly commanded the use of them, he doth so honour and bless them with his gracious Presence, that they cannot be in vain to any man which useth them as well as he can: but he which seriously and diligently applyeth himself though with a lesser disposition to Subjection and Obedience to God, shall be blessed with a greater by the Use of them, till he be thoroughly disposed and duly prepared for the End of them; *for he that waiteth on the Lord and keepeth his way, shall not be ashamed but saved.* Psal. 25. 3, 37, 34. That so few therefore are converted and saved in a great measure, is, because so few do faithfully employ their natural Abilities and common Graces: few use as well as they should and could the Gifts already received, and therefore better are withheld from them; *for he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also* (that is, *præparatione animæ*) *in much.* Luk. 16. 10. and he must not expect Special Favours who is unworthy of Common ones.

Seet.

Sect. 55. Inference 2. Then Employment is Gods way to Improvement, and if we then intend to better our estates of Abilities, Gifts, and Graces, let us make the best Use of them we can, refer them to their proper Ends, and combine with them to prosecute those Ends with all our might, and the enterprize will certainly prosper in our hands. *To him that [Thus] hath it shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* The Talents of Abilities and Graces are from an act of Almightyness in God, but the faithful Management and Use of those Talents is an act of Duty and Obedience in us: as the former depend upon Gods Grace, so the latter upon Our Industry; for all matters of Duty and Obedience are appropriately ours, and properly belong to Us, as all matters of Grace are appropriately Gods, and properly belong to him. And therefore we are to account, that the Employment, and consequently the Improvement of our particular Talents, is our own proper work, unto which we are to exercise our selves with all Care and Diligence. Certainly, God would not have condemned the slothful Servant for hiding his Talent, if it had not been his proper Work and Duty to have Employed and Improved it. Do not then in favour to your carnal Ease infer, That because *God worketh in you to will and to do*, Phil. 2. that you cannot bury his
Ta-

Talent, nor contradict his motion; that you must only have a Passive capacity to Receive from God, and must Do nothing, but God must do all: for according to the Spiritual Logick of the Apostle, that Principle is a premise to a quite contrary Conclusion; for, he thence infers our sollicitous Care and wary Industry, saying, *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12, 13. St. Chrysostome on the place well observes, that 'tis not simply said ἐργάζεσθε, *work*, but κατεργάζεσθε, *work out*, implying, that we must be Workers together with God, till the work of Salvation be brought to a full Perfection; and all the way we must fear and tremble, lest by inward Reluctations or outward oppositions, the Work miscarry, and so God be offended, and we destroyed.

Se^t. 56. Chamier well observes, *That when many Causes concur to produce one and the same Effect, the Scriptures sometimes ascribe the Effect to one of these Causes, and sometimes to another.* This is the Case here under consideration, *God worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*; and yet you are commanded from thence *to work out your Salvation*: which implies, that if the Abilities and Graces imparted to us from God, be in the end and issue actually Operative and Effective to our Salvation, it is in concurrence with our faithful Endeavours;

deavours; and that our Endeavours subordina-
tely to the Superintendency and Instigation
of the Grace of God, contribute Influence to-
wards Salvation. Hence Men are said to *save
Themselves*, 1 Tim. 4. 16. Act. 2. 40. and in or-
der to that, are said to *Recover Themselves out
of the snare of the Devil*, 2 Tim. 2. 25. and are
said to *keep Themselves pure*, 1 Tim. 5. 22. and to
keep Themselves in the Love of God. Jude 21.
and to *guide their Hearts in the way*. 1 John 3. 3.
Prov. 23. 9. All which expressions teach us,
that we are not saved by a meer passive Reci-
piency of saving Impressions, but by an active
industrious Cooperation with the powerful
Aids of Grace. 'Tis said, *that the blessing of
God maketh rich*; and yet in the same Chapter
'tis also said, *that the Diligent Hand maketh
rich*. Prov. 10. the meaning undoubtedly is
this, there must be Diligence on our part, or
else there will be no Blessing on Gods part.
Be content therefore to believe, that some
thing belongs to you, that you have a Talent
to manage, a Gift to exercise, Assistances to
comport with and use, a Diligence to main-
tain, and a work of Salvation to do.

Se^t. 57. It is with the generality of men in
the matter of Conversion or cleansing from Sin
(as 'tis sometimes called in Allusion to the le-
gal Cleansings) Eph. 5. 26. Jam. 4. 8. 2 Cor.
7. 1. as it was with *Naaman* in the matter of
his

his cleansing from his Leprosy, who when the Prophet counselled him to go and wash seven times in *Jordan* in order to it, he presently fell into a great Passion, and said, *I had thought he would have come to me, and have called on the name of his God, and laid his hands on me, and so I should have been healed.* 2 King. 5. 11. that is, he would have been healed his own way; he would contribute nothing of Submission, Obedience and Endeavour towards it, but would only be the Subject recipient of it: God and the Prophet must do all. So, many pretend they are willing to be converted or cleansed from the leprosy of Sin, but 'tis upon their own terms; if God by his omnipotent Impulse will over-power and irresistibly determine their Wills to chuse the better part, they must submit; for who *bath* or can, *resist his Will*? but for their parts they will be at no expense of Study, Care, or Pains for it: God and his subordinate Instruments must do it without them, if he will have it done. *It is not* (say they from the Apostle) *of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy,* Rom. 9. 16. And therefore the Work of Salvation is Gods work only, and not at all theirs, and if it be wrought it shall cost them nothing. Thus many abuse the Grace of God to Wantonnes; because the terms and conditions of Justification are only of Gods prescribing, & no other qualifications whatsoever but those

specify.

specified and limited by his Law can admit us to a participation of it, (to which that spoken of by the Apostle, only refers) therefore they, by a perverting of the Apostles words, conclude, that the work of Conversion is a work which God is to do upon them without them. That is, because God enacteth and imposeth Laws and Terms of Justification and Salvation without our Consent, therefore also Submission and Obedience to them shall be yielded and performed too without our consent. If I understand the force and design of such Reasonings, the scope and import of them is this, that God doth his own part and mans too, maketh and imposeth Laws upon us, and obeyeth and fulfilleth them himself for us too, and so acteth the part both of the Sovereign and the Subject.

Se^ct. 58. That famous saying of St. *Augustine* so much celebrated in the practical discourses of Divines, is a manifest and weighty Truth, *That he which Made thee without thee, doth not Justifie thee without thee.* You could not concur to the one because you were not, but you ought and must concur to the other because you are what you are; I mean, creatures of a proper capacity to do it, by the constitution of your Natures to be conducted unto God and all

Qui fecit
te sine te,
non te ju-
stificat si-
ne te. *Aug.*
Tom. 10.
De verbis
Apostoli
Ser. 15. p.
335.

F

perfe-

perfective enjoyments knowingly and electively. Conversion is an act of duty as well as of Grace, and mans share is so great in all acts of Duty, that they are properly denominated Mansact only, and not Gods. Would it not be absurd, if not worse, to say, *that God ceaseth to do Evil and Learneth to do well; that God turneth from Sin to God; that God repenteth unto Life and Salvation; that God believeth and bringeth forth fruits worthy of amendment*; which are all Scripture-Phrases, importing the same with *Conversion* and *Regeneration*? Although the Fire burns not without Gods concurrence, yet 'tis not God (according to a strict propriety of Speech) which burns, but the Fire; because notwithstanding Gods concurrence, the Fire acteth according to the essential properties of its Nature. God concurrerth with the Water as well as with the Fire, and yet that burns not but cooleth, aye, and can quench the Fire; and therefore notwithstanding Gods concurrence with things they act and move according to the intrinsecal properties of their Natures. So though Conversion or Regeneration be Gods workmanship, and no man quickeneth his own heart to turn it from Sin to God, without Gods concurrence, yet man converteth and turneth himself from Sin to God, because notwithstanding Gods concurrence man acteth

eth according to the essential Properties of his Nature, knowingly, judiciously, voluntarily, freely ; and is not divorced from Sin, and contracted unto God without his own Knowledg, Election and Consent. Why should those Truths which are directive to Conversion be propounded to our Understandings, and we be obliged to consider and meditate upon them? and why should those motives which are exciting to Conversion be propounded to our Wills, and we be obliged to comply and close with them, if we had nothing to do, and were not to bear a part with God in the Work?

Sect. 59. God which gave the Waters of the Pool Bethesda an healing Virtue, *Joh. 5. 2.* and sent an Angel at a certain time to trouble the Waters, to draw forth their Sanative Vertue, did not send an Angel too to drag the impotent from all quarters of the Country into the Pool, but if they obtained cure thereby they must either come themselves and go in, or else be brought and put in by others, that is, were to get into the Pool in an ordinary way of such endeavours as they were capable of using. So, God which hath given the Waters of the Sanctuary an healing Virtue, and at certain Seasons sends his Angels to stir these Waters for your healing, expects that you come to them, and

exercise the Powers you have to obtain healing from them, or else you are never like to be the better for them. For the Ministers of Religion do not cure the diseases of our Souls as a Charm or a Medicine the Diseases of our Bodies, without the interposition or use of our reasonable Faculties, but produce and work in us hatreds of Sin, and fruits in all Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth, by propounding efficacious arguments and motives to persuade our Reason, incline our Will, excite our Affections, and to engage our earnest and vigorous endeavours. *Be not deceived* (saith the Apostle) *God is not mocked, as a man soweth so shall he reap.* Gal. 6. 7. *q. d.* You may by your fair Pretenses and plausible Reasonings impose upon and deceive your selves, but you cannot do so by God, for he knoweth and will judge of things as they are; and as the Crop which the husbandman reapeth at harvest is answerable to the Nature of the Seed sown, so, such as your Endeavours are shall your Successes be, and you shall eat the Fruit of your own proper doings, be they what they will, and of none other. And as the husbandman cannot reap without sowing, nor sow without Labour and Industry, so neither can you reap in Mercy without sowing in Righteousness, partake of Gods Blessing without doing his Work,

Work, nor can you do his Work without exercising your selves in painful Endeavours.

Seēt. 60. When the Apostle beseecheth us not to receive the Grace of God in Vain. 2 Cor. 6. 1 and to look diligently lest any of us fail of the Grace of God. Heb. 12. 13. He plainly insinuates that our Study, Cares, and Industrie are concern'd in the good Issues and Effects of it upon us; that we may by the Power of our Wills, hinder and prevent the Powers of Gods Grace from prevailing to that desirable End and Issue to which God hath designed them. Certainly, had not the Eunuch addicted himself to reading of the Scriptures for to inquire after the mind of God concerning the things of his eternal Peace and Salvation, *Philip* had not been sent unto him to instruct him, and if *Philip* had not instructed him he had not understood them, nor consequently believed them, or ever received any advantage from them. And here I shall bring to your Remembrance a passage full to our purpose, in the Second part of the Homily of our Church, exhorting to the knowledg of Holy Scriptures, the words are these. *And whosoever giveth his mind to Holy Scriptures, with diligent Study, and burning Desire, it cannot be (saith St. Chrysostome) that he should be left without help. For either God Almighty will send him some Godly Doctor to*

teach him, as he did to instruct the Eunuch, a Noble man of Ethiope and Treasurer unto Queen Candice, who having affection to read the Scripture (although he understood it not) yet for the desire that he had to Gods word, God sent his Apostle Philip to declare unto him the true Sense of the Scripture that he read: or else if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above will give Light unto our minds and teach us those things which are necessary for us and wherein we be ignorant. If we read once, twice, and understand it not, let us not cease so, but still continue Reading, Praying, asking of others, and so by still Knocking, at the last the door shall be opened, as Saint Augustine saith. And that blessed Martyr Bishop Hooper in his Sermon, glossing on that Text in St. Job. ch. 6. 44. No man commeth unto me except my Father draw him: saith thus, Many understand these words in a wrong Sense; as if God required no more in a reasonable man than a dead post, and mark not the words which follow, every man that heareth and learneth of the Father commeth unto me, &c. God draweth with his Word and Holy Ghost, but mans Duty is to hear and learn; that is to say, to receive the Grace offered, consent to the Promise, and not to impugn the God that calleth.

Sect. 61. You have formerly heard that there was no difference betwixt the Talent employ-

employed and that hid: and the seed sown in the High-way and in good Ground were of the same kind too: but yet these did not produce the same Effect. It was not from any natural defect in the Talent hid that it was not employed and improved, nor from any imperfection of the Seed sown that it did not fructifie and increase, but the fault was wholly in the owner of the Talent, and in the Ground. Each Parable sheweth, that the different Success of the Gifts and Graces of God dispensed to Men, is not to be ascribed to the different Nature, Degree, and Tendency of them but to the different Constitutions, Dispositions, and Behaviours of those that partake of them. *The Lord* (saith *Athanasius*) soweth liberally, but the fructification is *προς τὸ ποικίμενον*, according to the Subject recipient of the Seed: when the Seed doth not fructifie, 'tis not because there is *ἀδυναμία τῆ σπόρου*, an impotency of the Seed, *ἀλλὰ κακίαν τῆς γῆς*, but an ill habit or indisposition of the Ground. The Seed of God hath sometimes lively Effects, and worketh kindly towards a lively Faith and a Life according to Godliness, and yet through mens Faultiness miscarrieth and comes to naught. The Spirit is not said to force our Powers, but to help our Infirmities. Rom. 8. 26. *συναγπλαμβάνεται*, Helpeth together. It is in *re quapiam suscepta*,

auxilio adesse laboranti, to assist with help one labouring in any undertaking, saith Erasmus. and accordingly, *Adjuvari non dicitur qui nihil spontè conatur*, He is not said to be helped who doth nothing of his own, saith Saint Augustine. The word (saith the Assemblies Annotations) properly implyeth such an help as when another man of Strength and Ability steppeth in to sustain the burthen that lyeth upon our Shoulders, setting his Shoulders under, to lift up and bear part with us. We must be employed or the Spirit will not help us, we must be upon our feet and in a readines to go on in our way, or the Spirit will not succour and lead us: we must work or we cannot be workers together with him. I laboured (saith the Apostle) more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor. 15.10. That is, *non solus, sed gratia Dei mecum*, *ac per hoc, nec gratia Dei sola, nec ipse solus, sed gratia Dei cum illo*, Not I alone, but the Grace of God with me, and by reason hereof, neither the Grace of God alone, nor I my self alone, but the Grace of God with my self, is St. Austin's Paraphrase of the Place. That is, Gods preventing Grace enabled him to labour, and his subsequent Grace cooperated with his labourings, and brought them to a good Effect.

Sect. 62. And because men can do that which God by his preventing Grace enableth them

them to do, the Grace of God is represented as our Duty as well as Gods Gift, *Let us have Grace* [that is, let us exert and put forth that ability God hath given to us to take hold of and retain, to comport with and use in a regular manner the Grace of God bestowed upon us] *that we may serve God acceptably with Reverence and Godly Fear.* Heb. 12. 28. and answerably to this Truth let me exhort you in the words of the Apostle, *watch ye, stand fast, quit your selves like men, be strong.* I Cor. 16. 13. wait for Seasons and Opportunities to employ your Talents, and do not by a drowsy sluggishness miss a Seed-time of Grace: when God knocks, open, and do not stubbornly repulse but carefully entertain and pursue, to the utmost issue, the good motions of the Spirit: do not give place to thy Spiritual Enemies, but keep thy ground against the World, the flesh, and the Devil: let not Difficulties and Dangers emasculate thy Spirit, and weaken the succours of thy Soul, but set out and keep on in a way of well-doing: shew the strength you have by the Oppositions you conquer, the singular exploits you do against Sin, and the advantage-Ground you gain to further the Perfection and Salvation of your Souls: and so the actions of Nature shall pass into the relations of Grace, and that which was im-

perfect

perfect shall be raised up to greater perfection.

Sect. 63. A Stoical lazy dependence on a fatal predestination is an instrument effective enough to produce a strong carnal Presumption, and to infer upon us the guilt of Damnation: but Salvation and Happiness is an interest too great, and good to be secured by faint Velleities, confident groundless persuasions, and weak sickly endeavours. If ever we enter in at the strait Gate, we must strive for it. *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate* [*ἀγωνίζεσθε*, Strive like an Olympick Agonist contending for Masteries] *for many I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Luk. 13. 24. He which valueth slightly, prayeth coldly, and labours carelessly to enter in at the strait Gate, he is not disposed for it according to the conditions of God, and therefore shall not enter.

Sect. 64. In secular and temporal matters we are wise enough to proportion our Affections and Endeavours suitably to the Nature of the things we aim at and pursue: to the biggest Interests and the most difficult Ends we appropriate the most careful Attendances and vigorous Prosecutions. We rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness that we may be Rich and Honourable, and live in Pleasures: but in matters of a
Spi-

Spiritual and of an eternal Interest who stirreth up himself? here for the most part we deal very foolishly, we do not proceed according to those steps and degrees the Nature of things requires. We do not measure the pains we are at, and the means we use, and the strength we exercise by the worthiness of the End we aim at and Pursue, but presume to obtain and secure the most important concern of our Souls by the slenderest Provisions and lowest Degrees of Care and Industry. What a strange Folly is it to think, that a provision for a temporal Life is to be gotten and secured with much Labour and Cost, and yet a provision for an eternal Life is to be obtained and secured upon very cheap and easie terms? What a doleful case is it, that the Objects of our Sense should prevail so much with us, and the Objects of our Faith so little? That we should cherish so fond an indulgence to the Appetites of the Flesh, and so perversely disregard the immortal Capacities of our precious Souls? That men in their Witts should prefer matters comparatively of no moment, in their Estimations, Choices, Resolutions, and Endeavours, before matters of an everlasting Consequence? That they should be careful and troubled about many things, and neglect the One thing needful? How can we pretend to be the masters of Reason

Reason and not set our hearts upon the better part? shall not that which is best have greatest Interest in us and sway most with us? let us then awaken our sluggish careless Faculties of Understanding, Judgment, and Reason, and employ most of our Strength in the Pursuit of that which is most necessary, profitable; and useful for us. *Labour not* (saith our Saviour) *for that meat which perisheth: but for that which endureth to everlasting Life.* Joh. 6. 27. 'Tis a supposed and pretended rather than an absolute and a real Necessity which provokes you to think that you have other Matters to look after, besides this; for if you faithfully mind and follow this, God himself hath undertaken for all other supplies which are needfull and proper for you; *seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Mat. 6. 33.

○ *Sect. 65.* I pray remember, when God giveth you temporal and earthly Gifts 'tis in order to Spiritual and Eternal Purposes, and answerably our Saviour commands you so to use them, *make to your selves friends of the unrighteous Mammon, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* Mat. 16. 9. Use temporal things in such a manner as agreeth with the design of Gods Trust, and then you shall secure to your selves eternal

nal things by the use of them. *Wisdom* (saith *Solomon*) *is good with an Inheritance.* Eccl. 7.

II. That is, an Estate governed by the rules of Wisdom is good, because then 'tis referred unto and concludes in our Spiritual and Eternal Good. And indeed nothing that we have or can have is good further than 'tis related and used as a means to this End. Brutes are as capable of sensual good things as we; they can eat, and drink, and play, and satisfie such Lusts as are proper to the Flesh, as well as we: but herein we excell them, in having and using these things we can possess and use them as the Gifts of God, and enjoy God in them, and so refer them to higher ends than the pleasing of the Flesh, even ascend by them unto God, and extract out of them an heavenly treasure for our Souls. And this is the use you must make of them if you ever reap any true Good from them. And thus a little, a matter very small and inconsiderable in it self, faithfully managed and employed will turn to a great advantage. Two Mites are not much, and a cup of cold Water is less, and yet such a stock as this, well used, shall abound to our account, *Mar. 12. 43. Mat. 10. 42. Phil. 4. 17.* Where little is given, little is expected; for God accepts according to what a man hath: but he that hath least and can do least, may do that which shall

shall be with the Lord, and for which the Exchequer of Heaven shall be accountable, and is as good an Estate as if it were in his hands.

Sect. 66. The learned and judicious *Camerro* saith, that where there is *Διαθεσις ad Virtutem*, an inchoate disposition to Goodness and Vertue (for that is the design of his assertion) *that man is not Planè improbus, altogether or quite and clean wicked*, as we say. For when a mans Nature is cultivated or improved by moral Vertues and common Graces, as he doth things *vel sapienter vel sanctè*, either discreetly or religiously, as Saint *Hierome* speaketh in this Case, he may be termed in a Sense not to be despised by considering men, a *Good man, secundum quid & in tantum*, so far as he hath performed part of his duty, and is in some measure made ready and prepared for those Gifts and Graces which denominate a man Evangelically Good. If he that acknowledged *there is one God, doth well*, as Saint *James* teacheth, *James 2. 19.* Then he that frameth and ordereth himself and actions so far as Nature and common Grace can carry him, according to that acknowledgment, doth better; as the young man in the Gospel did, and the man we are speaking of doth, and therefore he may analogically and comparatively be termed a *Good Man*. Yet I must
tell

tell you, if this temper and deportment be the utmost any man aimeth at and pursueth, and any of you shall chance to come so far, and rest here, and go no further, you will be of the number of those which are not far from the Kingdom of God, and strive to enter into it, but shall not be able to enter. This was the Reason why God was so angry with the Angel of the Church of the *Laodeceans* and threatned to *spue him out of his mouth*, Rev. 3. 16. because he rested in this intermedial State; whereas it is not a State desirable for it self, but to be endeavoured after and obtained in order to a better. For *Vallesius* upon the place tells us, that most think, that men of a certain remiss and imperfect kind of Vertue are called *Lukewarm*, and are more blamed than others, not because they are simply in themselves worse, but because they do not endeavour to be better than they are, by using their present imperfect State as a passage to a more perfect. And 'tis certain, that if men think too well of themselves for the sake of such an imperfect State of Mediocrity, and are less careful to repent and aspire after a perfect Vertue than others of lower attainments (though it do not arise properly from the Nature of the thing, but accidentally from the mistake and corruptions of the Persons) they will for the sake

lake thereof be loathsome and abominable unto God, and make themselves obnoxious to an utter Rejection from God, like those Saint Jude speaks of, who were twice dead, and plucked up by the Roots.

Sect. 67. Application. Every man (saith the Apostle) hath his proper Gift of God, 1 Cor. 7. 7. and answerably, every Man hath his proper Work to do for God, Mar. 13. 34. One must be serviceable unto God after this manner, another after that, according to the diversity of Gifts received from God. Every man hath a stewardly Work to do, and therefore must be faithfull as one that must give an account of his stewardship.

Sect. 68. First, Have you the Gift of Government? then make it appear by exercising your selves as the Ministers of God for the good of those you govern. Rom. 13. 4. acquit your selves as ordained and sent of God for the Punishment of evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. 1 Pet. 2. 14. I must suit my discourse to the present Occasion, which wholly refers to matter Ecclesiastical, and therefore shall exhort you to the use of your Talent that way. Decem preceptorum Custos Carolus, Charles the Keeper of Ten Commandements, was the Motto written on the Sword of Charles the Great. and Defender of the Faith, is the Honorary Title and

and Engagement of King Charles the Second, of England. And so far as Authority is derived from him to you, are you concerned in the same Title and engagement. For we must not only pray for Kings, but also for all in Authority under them, that we may lead a quiet Life in all Godliness and Honesty, 1 Tim. 2. 2. Which supposeth that your Government must influence and subserve our Religious and Spiritual as well as our Civil and Moral Affairs. You are called Gods, Psalm 82. 1. John 10. 34. and you were Catachrestically and Abusively so called on Purpose; you were despicable terrestrial Animals if your Authority were not to be concerned in the matters of God, and for the preservation of mens Souls as well as Bodies and Estates.

Se^ct. 69, I know that *Donatus* and his Sectarian Followers are still crying in your Ears, *Quid Imperatori cum Ecclesiis*, what hath the Magistrate to do with the Churches? but I hope you will answer them from the Prophet crying aloud to you as a trumpet, that you are to be as nursing Fathers to the Church, Isa. 49. 23. Which you cannot be, if you permit Seducers to poyson her by Heretical Doctrines, or Schismatics to destroy her by Divisions.

Sect. 70. Give me leave to mind you,
 That Religious Dissentions amongst all sorts
 of Persons, in all Ages, have been transacted
 with vehement Passion and Violence, and
 have proved most Fatal and Bloody. *For
 this Cause* (saith our Saviour) *the Brother shall
 betray the Brother to Death, Father the Son, and
 Children shall rise up against their Parents, and
 shall cause them to be put to Death, Mar. 13. 12.*
 For Religion being the greatest Interest in the
 World, Religious Affections are strongest,
 and more prevalent than Natural, and conse-
 quently Men will resist with greatest Earnest-
 ness whatsoever tends to subvert and destroy
 it, and they will spare the Destruction of no
 man to preserve it. This was the ground
 of *Campanella's* Speech to the *Spanish* King,
Religio semper vicit, præsertim armata, Religion,
especially being armed, hath always conquered.
 And therefore Innovations in Matters of Re-
 ligion must needs be of dangerous conse-
 quence to the publick Peace: for he that
 pretends one thing false, may easily question
 the truth of another, and so by degrees
 bring the whole under suspicion. And if
 once the People apprehend that their Ru-
 lers have abused them in a matter of dear-
 est Concern, and that they do not Rule them
 from Principles of Conscience, and Reasons
 of Religion, but from Design, and Reason of
 State,

State, they will soon become as weary of them as of their Religion, and answerably will seek out other Rulers as well as another Religion ; as your own experience hath taught you.

Sect. 71. It is therefore a Prudential way, for the securing the Ends of Government, that the Penalties inflicted on the Violaters of Ecclesiastical Orders respectively to Gods publique Worship, have respect, not so much to the simple Nature and Merit of the Offence in it self considered, as to the malignant destructive Influences and dismal Consequences of it, respectively to the publick safety of Church and Common-wealth. *Behold, how great a matter a little Fire kindleth!* saith Saint James, James 3. 5. small matters in Nature, Art, Providence, and Religion too in their progress and ultimate Issue become very great. You know the immediate Issue of a departure from uniformity is diversity, and because every man is well affected to that which is his own, thinks his own Opinions and Practices best, he that worshippeth God one way dislikes, censures, and condemns him which worshipping God another way, and most commonly the lesser the difference, the greater and more severe the mutual Animosity and Censure, because then each concludes that 'tis Humour, Pride, Faction,

Faction, and Interest and not constraints of Conscience and Religion which is the ground of the Distance and Separation. And from this spring Debates, Rancors, Enmities and Oppositions in the Church, and thence by a most natural progress Factions, Seditions, Tumults and Rebellions in the State. For they that will not patiently admit and submit unto other mens Opinions, Impositions and Practices, they cannot endure that their own should be neglected, contradicted, and rejected.

Señ. 72. Factious minded men are always proud, and erroneous Opinions being fermented with Pride, efferate the hearts of men, make them touchy, fierce and contentious, *Prov. 13. 10.* And finally urge them to go in the way of Cain, as the expression is, *Jude 11.* The instances of the *Circumcellions*, *Arrians*, *Donatists* of old, and of the *Señaries* of latter time both at home and abroad attest, that false Doctrines and new ways of Worship and Discipline which are weak in themselves, cannot be supported without Blood and Cruelty. And when once men pretend to be so certain of the Truth of their conceits as if immediately inspired by God, and arrive to an infallibility, they that can judge and do nothing amiss being most fit to sway all, they presently by

a very easie step of advance, arrogate to themselves a Supremacy too, and then 'tis their unquestionable prerogative to throw down and destroy all that oppose them. *Presumptuous are they*, (saith the Apostle) *self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities*, 2 Pet. 2. 10. And when men are so bold and insolent, as to speak contumeliously, how easily are they induced to proceed from words to blows, and to act rebelliously?

Sect. 73. It is therefore certainly the Magistrates Interest as well as Duty, to restrain open and professed Dissentions and Divisions in the Church, and by Coercion and Penalties to compell those which profess the same Religion to Glorifie God with one mouth, *Matt. 14. 23. Rom. 15. 6.* Thus *Josiah*, 1 *Chron. 38. 2. Asa*, 2 *Chron. 14. 13. Solomon* did, 1 *King. 8. 1. 2 Chron. 8. 14. and 18.* and herein they did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. And the reasons from whence they did it, to wit, in Zeal to Gods Honour, and for the prevention of Infection by Evil Examples, for the curing of Offenders, and the preventing or removing of Judgments, *Dent. 13. 5. and 11. 16, 17. 1 Tim. 1. 20. Zech. 13. 6.* are reasons of Immutable Equity and Moral Obligation, and extend to Magistrates indifferently in all Times and Ages. And you shall find when *Artaxerxes* de-

creed, that whosoever will not do the Law of God, and of the King, that Judgment shall be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto Death or unto Banishment, or to confiscation of Goods, or to Imprisonment, Ezra blessed God, that he had put such a thing into the Kings heart, Ezra 7. 26, 27. This being done by an Ethnick Prince, 'tis easie to collect from it, that there is a Naturalness in the thing, and belongs to a Magistrate, *as such*, to compell men professing a Religion, publickly to own, and observe the Institutions and Ordinances of it, and consequently 'tis not a *Persecution* of the Professors of Religion, *as such*, but a just *Prosecution* of them as Evil Doers, Enemies and Rebels against the Government of Jesus Christ, to punish them for refusing to attend and observe the Ordinances of that Religion they profess.

Seet. 74. And let me beg the liberty to tell you, that 'tis not the contriving and Enacting, but the Execution of good Laws which gives them a Real and an Effective Being to the purposes of Government. Our large Volumes of good Statutes, without a due Execution, and their Penal Enforcements, are like a Picture curiously drawn, only to shew the skill of the Limner, or a bundle of antiquated Almanacks, or the Laws of an *Utopian* State, matters of meer Form,
farther

farther than to be a *σηλιδυτικόν*, a reproachful Sarcaſm to us, that though we had the Authority and wit to make good Laws we had not the Honesty and Prudence to use them.

Seet. 75. I have conceited that our late *Indulgence* or Toleration was designed by some politick Statesmen (and if it were not so, I hope it will prove so) to be to us as the *ἀνομία περθημερῶν*, *Stobæus* speaks of, the *five Days lawless Liberty* was to the *Persians* upon the death of their King, in which every man might do as he pleased without fear of Punishment, that seeing the mischievous Consequences of being lawless, we might prize the more highly, and yield Obedience the more chearfully to those Laws which are compulsive to Uniformity in Gods Worship.

Seet. 74. Our Saviour, who had no design of cruelty either upon mens Bodies or Consciences, when he apprehended men professing Religion, upon religious Pretences perverting the institutions thereof, he did not only severely reprove them but disgracefully whip'd them, and violently drave them out of the Temple. *Dent. 14. 24, 25, 26. Exod. 30. 13, 14, 15.* comp. with *Jo. 2. 13. to 18.* Our Saviour presumed, that they which had been instructed in Religion all the Days of their Lives understood it, and

therefore doth not enter into a dispute with them to convict their Judgments, and change their Hearts before he proceeds to Punish them, but bitterly reprehends them in Words, and then falls to Blows, and forceth them from their irreligious disorders. And those Christian Magistrates, that are inspired and acted by the same Principle and Spirit of Zeal their Lord and Master was, whose Vicegerents they are, will not tamely endure but courageously revenge all publick Doctrines and Practices which tend to the subversion of Religion and the desolation of the Church.

- Sect. 76. Secondly, Is it given to thee to be a Steward of the Mysteries of God? then, *'tis required* (saith the Apostle) *that thou be found faithful.* 2 Cor. 4. 2. And the faithfulness of the Servants in the Parable relating to my Text, consisted in the diligent employment and improvement of their Talents to those Purposes their Lord designed them. though you are *προεστώτες* to the People, and are authoritatively to instruct, rebuke, exhort and rule them, yet you are *ὀπίστανται* to Christ, and Servants to God, and must manage and discharge the Office intrusted with you, just as he hath appointed and no otherwise, do all in his Name with respect to his Ends. As *Agents* therefore for God communicate to them *what you have received from the Lord,*

1 Cor.

1 Cor. 11. 23. And that in due season as their Needs require, and opportunity offers; and remember, that 'tis not enough barely to minister to the needs of your People; for God expects that you do it with Care, Labour, and Diligence. *Study to approve thy self a Work-man,* 2 Tim. 2. 15. do not distribute to them that which comes next to hand; *Jacob's Venison* which was soon got, was not altogether of the best, but consider what is most suitable to their Conditions, and what likely will be most serviceable to the End of your Ministry. the Preacher *sought to find out acceptable words.* Eccl. 12. 10. He that designs to be useful to the Church will not grutch to be at some Pains to find out what will be most effective to her Edification. *I am willing* (saith the Apostle) *to spend my self and to be spent for you,* 2 Cor. 12. 15. *καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὑμῶν*, for your Souls, according to the *Pythagorean* Dialect *ἡ ψυχὴ σου*, thy Soul is Thou. Love of mens Souls should be a greater constraint than fear of Punishment. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* 1 Pet. 5. 2. And I will be bold to tell you, that a willing and ready Mind rarely wants a fit and fair opportunity to do Good. Saint Paul's advice is, *that we be instant in Season*
and

and out of Season. 2 Tim. 4. 2. That is, that we do not only take hold of those Opportunities which are most fairly offered, and most especially probable and hopeful to conduce to the furtherance of the Purposes of our Ministry, but we must watch for Opportunities, and make attempts to do Good, when our Corruption, Laziness, and secular Regards would fain serve a Writ of Ease upon us, and when outward circumstances are not so fair and promising as we could wish they were. *Non fieri potest, ut non aliquando succedat, multa tentanti*, said the Cynick in Seneca. And a wiser than he saith, *in the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.* Eccl. 11. 6. For God, on whom all our Labours and Successes depend, however uncertain events are to us, may bring all we do to a good Effect and Issue, Whatever come of the thing you do, if you do it *willingly*, as unto the Lord, you shall have your Reward, 1 Cor. 9. 17.

Se^t. 77. And now, that my discourse may end agreeably to the design of this our solemn Assembling, let me beseech you, *my Reverend Fathers and Brethren*, to commend to your Peoples acceptance that you dispense to them, by your own Practice and Example.

When

When your Ministrations and Sermons are *καὶ τῆς πράξεως ἐμψυχούμεναι*, animated and quickened by your Practice, they are more operative and impressive, more amiable and apt to affect your people than when only nakedly transacted and delivered, because then they have a material and active demonstration that the design of them is possible and practicable. But let me tell you, if you exact more from your People than you do your selves, men will say of you as our Saviour in the like case, *that you bind burdens on the Peoples shoulders, which you your selves will not touch with the top of your fingers, Mat. 23. 4. Luk. 11. 46.* And consequently, that you secretly mock and laugh at them for stooping down, like *Iffachars* Asses, to take up unnecessary burdens from which you excuse your selves. You cannot be such strangers to the humour of some People, but you must know, that nothing is more agreeable to their temper than Comedies, Satyres and Sarcasmes dealt out against the Clergy as Holy-Cheats, and he that is most ready to justify his own Omissions of Duty from his *Parsons* neglects, and is most witty in his Comments and Reflexions on the Follies and Miscarriages of his *Ghostly-Father*, whether real or imaginary, he is the most agreeable Companion. Take heed, that you do not act a
part

part in such Raileries against your selves. Let them be only a Narration of the malevolent Images of their own vitiated Phantasies, and not a Representation of your Actions.

Sect. 78. *Aristophanes* attempted to make *Socrates* ridiculous, when he represented him upon the Stage, measuring the leaps of a Flea: but never so bitterly exposed him as when he brought him gravely discoursing and prescribing the measures of Justice and Honesty, and in the mean time stealing a piece of Plate from his Neighbour. You may be contemned, but never will be contemptible till you Love and Practise that your selves, which you forbid and declaim against. For when you partake of the same Guilts you reprove in others, you upbraid your selves, and give a strong Evidence that you are exceeding weak or very wicked. And if you despise your own Ministries, will not others do so too? will others approve and receive from you that which you dislike and reject? and be sure of this, the People are not so metaphysicall as to despise your Offices abstractedly from your Persons: and if they have no respect for you, they will insult over you rather than obey you. 'Tis well known, that you have so many good Friends about you, that there is one *Woe* they will certainly secure and save you from, *Woe be to you when*
all

all men shall speak well of you; Luk. 6. 24. Be
perswaded to deliver your selves from that
Woe too which our Saviour denounced against
the *Pharisees*, because they Said, but Did not,
Mat. 23. 4. Let Soundness of Doctrine be se-
conded by an unblameable Conversation,
and then whatever entertainment you meet
withal from the World, you shall surely ob-
tain a farther improvement in your Gifts and
Graces, a comfortable Conscience within your
own Breast, a good report in Gods Church,
a gracious Protection from God in this World,
and a Crown of Righteousness in the World
to come.

F I N I S.